Commentary

Volume Sixty-nine, Number Two, February 1980

Indochina & the American Conscience

Peter L. Berger

In Defense of Intelligence Tests
R. J. Herrnstein

Korah's Revolt
Robert J. Milch

Kissinger and His Critics
Walter Laqueur

Inside Jewish History
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FICTION
Mailer: Settling for Less
Pearl K. Bell

MUSIC
The Russian Wave
Samuel Lipman

BOOKS
Kenneth S. Lynn
David Vital
Jane Larkin Crain
Rachel Mark

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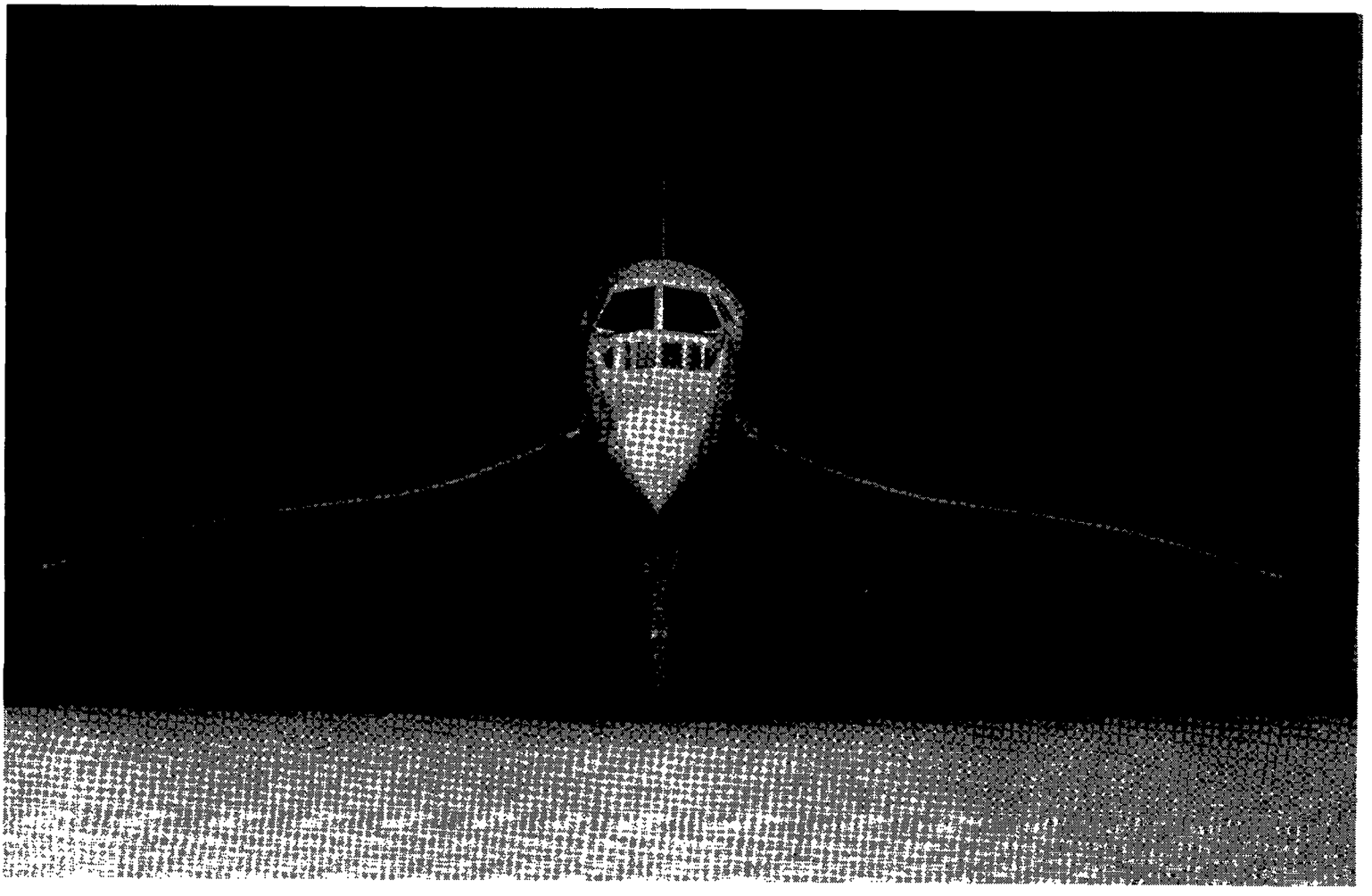

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Commentary

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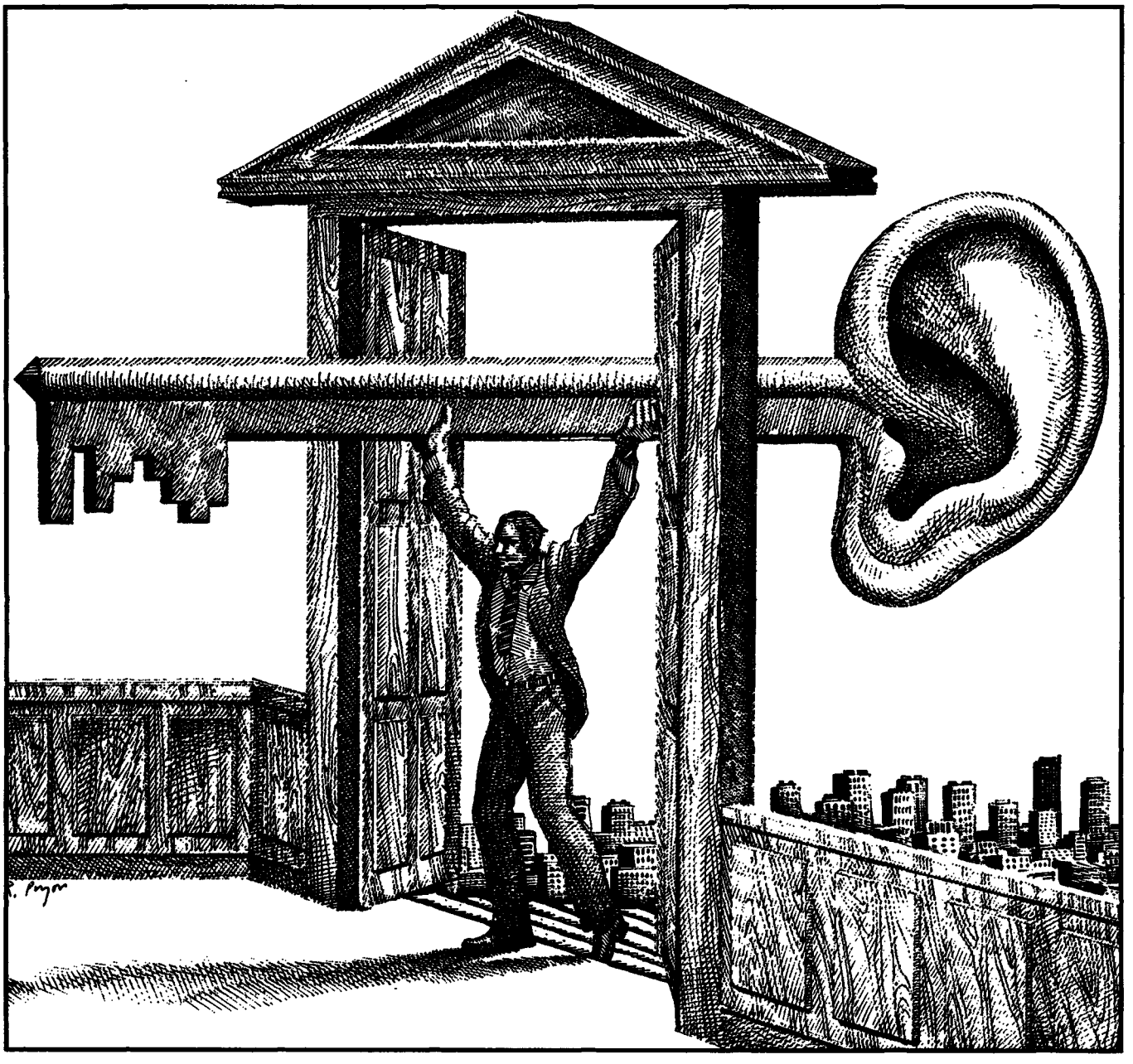

OPENING THE CLOSED DOORS OF JUSTICE

ATLANTA, Georgia—During the trial of a pornography king in Rome, Ga., the judge suddenly ordered the doors of justice shut on the public and their free press while he heard the testimony of a key witness.

Reporter Neil Craig of WXIA-TV, the Gannett television station in Atlanta, objected. He read into the record a statement of protest from The Gannett Card, a wallet-size card which equips all Gannett newsstaffers with a prepared plea for a hearing on any move to close a courtroom to the press or the public. This card also includes a reminder of the people's First Amendment rights to a free and unfettered press.

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In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. Its pages will be hospitable to diverse points of view and belief, and it hopes to encourage original creative endeavor in the various fields of culture. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

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Letters from Readers

U.S. Foreign Policy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jeane Kirkpatrick's courageous and reasoned article ["Dictatorships & Double Standards," November 1979] will upset the utopians and confound the cynics, and so it should. Its searing indictment of President Carter's moralism in foreign policy has already been ratified by events, and the end is not yet in sight.

If consequences are the ultimate test of policy, Carter's selective indignation toward other governments should receive a distressingly low score. It has perplexed and alienated our allies and given aid and comfort to our adversaries.

True, the confusion among American liberals between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes has persisted since 1945, but under Carter this pernicious error has influenced policy as never before. One reason for this is the shallow historical memory among some of Carter's top aides: their concept of American responsibility was formed largely by the Vietnam experience and the U.S. civil-rights movement, and they have at best a dim recollection of the Yalta agreements, the Soviet conquest of Eastern Europe, the Berlin blockade, the Korean war, the rape of Budapest in 1956, and the snuffing out of Prague's spring in 1968.

This flawed historical consciousness, aided and abetted by an ill-founded sense of guilt about America's "repression" in the Third World, adds up to a singularly destructive form of self-flagellation which must be overcome (at least in high places) if the United States is once again to resume its proper role as a respected, dependable, and compassionate leader of the free world.

ERNEST W. LEFEVER
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

We are all in Jeane Kirkpatrick's debt for her magnificent analysis of American attitudes toward pro-American and anti-American Third World autocracies. Despite the claims of "natural law" discoverers since Cicero and earlier, there cannot logically be a transcultural standard by which various cultures can be measured unless such a standard is hinged on religious faith, an anchor which is rigorously eschewed by the prophets of "development." Let me just add a few footnotes here, without in the least attempting to question the main thrust of Mrs. Kirkpatrick's analysis.

1. The progress doctrine so well dissected by Mrs. Kirkpatrick has long been with us in other guises. A. T. Mahan, for example, meant much the same thing when he wrote, more than three-quarters of a century ago, of the West's burden of Christianizing the world. It was only about a quarter-century ago that the devotees of global progress emphasized the central significance of private property and the free market. The abandonment of these earlier hallmarks and the abhorrence in which they are held by today's "developmentalists" should alert us to trends in the future which may well find that such favorite themes as a free press or equal rights for women will be jettisoned in favor of God knows what. . . .

2. Care must be used in defining friends and enemies among Third World oligarchies and autocracies. Anti-Communism, however admirable in itself, is not enough. Furthermore, measuring the degree of usefulness of any particular autocracy to the United States should be a continual process, and one should not hesitate to ask, "What have you done for me *recently*?" It is necessary also to examine the problem and prospects of the friendly autocrat cold-bloodedly. . . .

3. Mrs. Kirkpatrick skirts another issue, which is probably even more weighty. She does, however, touch upon it in the last section of her article where she implies clearly that American foreign and security policy must be compatible not only with the "national interest" but also with the "defense of freedom." No one will argue about the significance of the national interest narrowly conceived in terms of sovereignty, territorial integrity, national welfare, or even honor and prestige. But if something like "freedom" is admitted on equal terms with the national interest, all bets are off, and various weird preferences for one state over another will have to be given pedigrees as visions and versions of "freedom." If one means collective freedom,

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- ☐ Sponges
- ☐ Detergents
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- ☐ Sunglasses
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- ☐ Plastic wood
- ☐ Stuffed animals
- ☐ Car mats
- ☐ Soft contact lenses
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- ☐ Trash bags
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- ☐ Knitting needles
- ☐ Fan blades
- ☐ Wigs
- ☐ Window shutters
- ☐ Salad bowls
- ☐ Epoxy glue
- ☐ Punching bags
- ☐ Model ships
- ☐ Shavers
- ☐ Plywood adhesive
- ☐ Parkas
- ☐ Football suits
- ☐ Cameras
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- ☐ Swizzle sticks
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one falls into the bottomless and ludicrous morass of "self-determination." If one means individual freedom, one can hardly escape a confrontation with the concept of property rights as individual freedom, or with the conflicts among cultures and even nationalities as to what freedom is or is not. If there is no timeless transcultural standard of progress, how can there be a timeless and transcultural standard of freedom? We would be better advised to watch a narrow national interest and assume that it overlaps with "freedom."

JOHN W. BOWLING
Troy, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her article Jeane Kirkpatrick demonstrates the dire consequences of the inept attempts by the relevant U.S. institutions to move Iran and Nicaragua toward (Western) democracy on the basis of euphonious slogans (about human rights, for example). The author points out that what is known as "democracy" is a highly complex socio-historical phenomenon which took Britain seven centuries to arrive at. Within this subject, Mrs. Kirkpatrick says what has to be said.

But I am interested in something vast, new, difficult yet crucial, lying beyond this subject. Surely one cannot accept *a priori* the belief that since it took seven centuries for democracy to grow in Britain, democracy cannot be "man-made." What about Japan, where democracy was "man-made" within years? I have heard the skeptical answers to this question: the skeptics dig into the history of Japan and fish out what *now* seems to them to prove that antecedents of Western-style democracy were present in the history of Japan, in contrast to Iran or Nicaragua (or Vietnam, Korea, Russia). These *ad hoc* rationalizations after the fact are usually not even worthy of discussion.

In other words, Mrs. Kirkpatrick's article points to something crucial outside its subject: today's ignorance as to how democracy can be developed rationally by man; how quickly it can be developed, if at all; and where and when. Surely this ignorance should not be taken as something impossible to overcome.

LEV NAVROZOV
Riverdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jeane Kirkpatrick's article makes some good points about the need to protect our friends,"traditional autocracies" included, in order to maintain United States influence in the Third World so-called. However, the conclusions do not apply to United States relations with Latin America except in a very marginal way.

Most of the Latin American governments are dictatorships, or only quasi-constitutional, and many suffer from political instability. But now that the Somozas are gone, there are no Latin American regimes, except possibly in Haiti (not a very typical Latin American political system, either), that fit Mrs. Kirkpatrick's description. . . .

I can think of no Latin American head of state (again excepting "Baby Doc" Duvalier of Haiti) of whom it is possible to conclude that "Without him, the organized life of the society will collapse, like an arch from which the keystone has been removed." . . . In none of the other countries is there any danger of a situation in which "armies collapse, bureaucracies abdicate, and social structures dissolve once the autocrat is removed." With the exception of a few of the smallest and most disorganized countries, two or three at the most, there is no danger that the political regime will be overthrown and destroyed by Communist-led revolution.

"Autocracy," as used in Mrs. Kirkpatrick's article, seems to be like Humpty-Dumpty—easily broken in a shattering that gives way to chaos. The only safe course with this kind of autocracy seems to be, as with an egg, to let it alone in hopes that it will hatch something worth having, perhaps even, eventually, "democracy."

Actually Latin American political regimes are not at all like Humpty-Dumpty—no fear of their shattering in the fall when pushed over. The Latin Americans have a variety of ways of handling the succession, often unconstitutional. But crises of the kind that took Cuba from Batista to Castro and that twenty-one years later could bring results we don't like in Nicaragua are highly exceptional—regardless of past U.S. excursions and alar-

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HOW TO SAVE YOUR LIFE AND THE ONE NEXT TO YOU

OVERCOMING YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL RESISTANCE TO SEAT BELTS MAY BE THE KEY.

The facts are startling. Experts estimate that about half of all automobile occupant fatalities last year might have been avoided if the people had been wearing seat belts. That's because injuries occur when the car stops abruptly and the occupants are thrown against the car's interior. Belts prevent this.

Many people say they know the facts, but they still don't wear belts. Their reasons range all over the lot: seat belts are troublesome to put on, they are uncomfortable, or they wrinkle your clothes. Some people even think getting hurt or killed in a car accident is a question of fate; and therefore, seat belts don't matter.

If you're one of those people who don't use belts for one reason or another, please think carefully about your motivations. Are your objections to seat belts based on the facts or on rationalizations?

Here are a few of the common rationalizations. Many people say they are afraid of being trapped in a car by a seat belt. In fact, in the vast majority of cases, seat belts protect passengers from severe injuries, allowing them to escape more quickly. Another popular rationalization: you'll be saved by being thrown clear of the car. Here again, research has proved that to be untrue—you are almost always safer inside the car.

Some people use seat belts for highway driving, but rationalize it's not worth the trouble to buckle up for short trips. The numbers tell a different story: 80% of all automobile accidents causing injury or death involve cars traveling under 40 miles per hour. And three quarters of all collisions happen less than 25 miles from the driver's home.

When you're the driver, you have the psychological authority to convince all of the passengers that they should wear seat belts. It has been shown that in a car, the driver is considered to be an authority figure. A simple reminder from you may help save someone's life. And please remember children can be severely injured in automobile accidents, too. Make sure Child Restraint Systems are used for children who aren't old enough to use regular seat belts.

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ums, e.g., the Dominican Republic in 1966, Chile in 1973.

The major countries of South America—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela—have lived under both civilian and military rule since World War II; the civilians have gained power through more or less open elections; the military leaders, all with institutionally strong organizations, have intervened with varying degrees of frequency to forestall what they see as threats to the social order or to their own establishment. . . . These countries, with the bulk of Latin American population, wealth, and resources, face little threat from Communist takeovers unless there were to follow international upheavals so severe as to bring on revolutionary crises throughout the world. It was Nixon's error and our misfortune that he thought the Chilean army needed U.S. aid in order to overthrow Allende.

Mexico has its own institutionalized combination of autocracy and representative rule. The Mexican regime is at no more risk than the leading South American countries of being destroyed by Communist-led revolution.

The smaller countries of South and Middle America have political and military institutions that are much less strong and organized than those of their bigger, richer neighbors, but they are still fairly flexible and far from depending for leadership on one man or one family. Their prospects for resisting Communist revolution are good. Less well-armored politically than the big countries, they nevertheless will not be allowed to go the way of Cuba if these big neighbors can help it.

Even the weaker Latin American political regimes have very little in common with those of other Third World countries. Some Latin American countries have a substantial record of political competition dating back as far as the mid-19th century and they have generally looked to Western Europe and the United States for their political models. U.S. stereotypes of Latin American politics have been much affected by viewing the whole region in a "banana republic" perspective. With its Third World focus, Mrs. Kirkpatrick's article only freshens up the old misperception. (Also we might beware of complacency about how well U.S. political practice meets John Stuart Mill's standards of political purity cited in the article.)

Latin American political systems, on the other hand, do not give much ground for Mrs. Kirkpatrick's hope that "right-wing autocracies" will evolve into "democracies—given time, propitious . . . circumstances, talented leaders, and a strong indigenous demand for representative government. . . . [T]he first steps have been taken in Brazil [and] could conceivably also have occurred . . . in Nicaragua if contestation and participation had been more gradually expanded." This description fits the hatching-of-the-egg model—promised in the article if Humpty-Dumpty can stay on the wall. But it has little to do with actuality in Latin America. In Brazil, for example, the civilian political institutions that take power back from the military may be no more or less representative than those dislodged in 1964. . . .

If we want a political model for Latin America, it could well be the revolving door, except in Mexico. This revolving motion normally dislodges a military autocracy in less than ten years in the leading countries of the region. The door has become stuck beyond the usual term only in Brazil (since 1964) and Peru (since 1968), but even in these countries it now shows signs of once more starting to revolve. When these "revolutions" of the revolving-door variety take place, they are not social revolutions or uncontrollable crises. And we should resist the impulse to stick a foot in the door, and, if possible, also avoid giving it a push.

In Latin America the traditional U.S. policy of arm's-length dealing with dictators still has much to be said for it, even when carried to doctrinaire extremes. The U.S. is generally more at ease dealing with governments of countries that have politically competitive systems—an alternation of "ins" and "outs," even though neither party may be highly representative of a popular majority. And the U.S. can count on having better long-run relations with a Latin American country when the U.S. government has not let itself become too closely involved with a dictatorship, military or other, and has shown a decent regard for the civilian political class that stands ready to take over from the military when the latter's mandate to rule is exhausted.

ELIZABETH H. HYMAN
Alexandria, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In an otherwise eloquent attack on the failure of American foreign policy to consider America's self-interest and to distinguish between autocrats and revolutionaries as agents of social change, Jeane Kirkpatrick has added another name to the list of authors in COMMENTARY who are creating a myth about American liberals. . . . I refer to the myth that liberals are blind to the realities of Soviet expansionist desires and therefore are on the wrong side of every question which has some bearing on the relative influence and power of the United States and the Soviet Union. Two examples taken from Mrs. Kirkpatrick's article will suffice to demonstrate the rhetoric used to promote this myth. In the first, Mrs. Kirkpatrick makes the claim that there is a set of beliefs "widely shared in the *liberal community generally*," one of which is that any change, "including the establishment of a government headed by self-styled Marxist revolutionaries," is preferable to retaining an incumbent autocratic government (emphasis added). The second is a quotation from Stephen Rosenfeld of the Washington *Post* which Mrs. Kirkpatrick cites approvingly. After referring to the fact that "Vietnam has been transformed for much of American public opinion from a country wronged by the U.S. to one revealing a brutal essence of its own," Rosenfeld goes on to say that "This has been a quiet but major trauma to the Carter people (as to *all* liberals)" (emphasis added).

Not only are both of these statements patent exaggerations, they are undocumented as, in fact, is the rest of Mrs. Kirkpatrick's article. Most liberals are as aware as anyone else of the lack of evidence that Marxist ideologues are benign democrats. They do frequently differ from conservatives and neoconservatives on how to deal with this problem, and it is on issues related to this problem that the discussion should be joined, not on the straw edifice erected to demonstrate how much wiser others (shall we call them non-liberals?) are.

There are a number of other serious flaws in the article that deserve discussion but would dilute the principal point of my concern. One does deserve mention, however. The very first sentence of the article condescendingly claims that the crowning achievement of the foreign policy of the Carter admin-

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W TO LISTEN THAN TWO EARS.

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istration has been to "lay the groundwork for the transfer of the Panama Canal from the United States to a swaggering Latin dictator of Castroite bent." . . . At least five earlier administrations, starting with that of Dwight Eisenhower, worked on the Canal treaty, and as for the crowning achievement of the foreign policy of the Carter administration, you may take your choice: the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the final *de facto* recognition of mainland China as a national entity certainly are more significant achievements, wise or unwise, as only the test of time will prove them to be.

ELLIOT CHARNEY
Bethesda, Maryland

JEANE KIRKPATRICK writes:

Obviously, the letters of Ernest W. Lefever, John W. Bowling, and Lev Navrozov seem to me most discerning and persuasive. I appreciate their comments and will consider their letters first.

Mr. Bowling raises important questions concerning the relations between morality and politics which deserve expanded treatment, but I cannot resist a comment here. If I have understood him correctly, Mr. Bowling cautions against associating the "defense of freedom" with the "national interest," first, because defense of the national interest seems to him justification enough for a foreign policy; second, because all other principles, including freedom, are transient and parochial ("If there is no timeless transcultural standard of progress, how can there be a timeless and transcultural standard of freedom?"); and third, because invoking freedom as a ground of policy opens an unmanageable debate about the proper definition of freedom. I respect Mr. Bowling's argument, but cannot agree that a foreign policy should be or can be justified without regard to the moral quality of the nation that espouses it, or the moral consequences of implementing it.

I believe that I understand the considerable pitfalls involved in "moralizing" foreign policy and I agree with Messrs. Bowling and Lefever that the human-rights policies of the Carter administration illustrate these hazards. But the case against "value-free" foreign policy seems still more persuasive. Governments are not morally neutral: some protect their citizens against arbitrary power, some promote slavery; some cultivate individual freedom, some consign their critics to concrete boxes; some are restrained to a fault in the use of coercion, some would as soon starve their subjects as feed them. The fact that all nations with which the U.S. must deal do not meet our moral standards and the fact that the U.S. must sometimes, knowingly, deliberately, undertake morally repugnant acts, do not, I believe, mean that foreign policy is morally neutral. They only mean that morality in foreign policy (as in life) depends on prudential judgments about how to balance and apply competing principles in concrete situations.

The "realistic" foreign policy that pursues "national interest" without regard to morality ultimately founders on its lack of realism about the irreducible human concern with morality. The identification of moral purpose and national interest need not be articulated in order to be felt, but habitual silence about a nation's ethos and purposes will eventually render citizens less certain that their cause is just, especially when, as in our own time, the nation's morality is continually and aggressively denied by hostile powers. I believe that the rhetoric and behavior of many in this nation's political elite reflect an ambiguity and ambivalence about the national interest that is rooted in prior doubts about its morality. If we—the likes of Mr. Bowling and me—cannot establish the connection between the national interest and the defense of freedom, we should not be surprised at the withering away of the nation's reputation and power.

I share Lev Navrozov's interest in how, when, and where democratic institutions can be brought into being. As he understands, in emphasizing the socio-cultural preconditions for democracy I did not intend to imply that a democratic system cannot be deliberately created or that seven centuries are necessarily required to bring one into being. I sought only to underscore the complexity of the task, and to emphasize that democracies cannot be brought into being by the good intentions of American policymakers who underestimate the difficulty of the undertaking. This does not mean that democratic institutions need be an entirely indigenous growth. In India, practices introduced by British colonial governments have apparently taken root. In Japan and the German Federal Republic, military-occupation policies designed to encourage the development of democratic institutions had the desired results. But a foreign power only rarely has the degree of control provided by colonial rule or military occupation.

A nation like the United States can encourage the development of democratic practices in countries which it does not rule, providing it has time, influence, and realistic expectations about the obstacles. The U.S. might have served as midwife to democracy in Southeast Asia if it had won the Vietnam war and stayed on to supervise the ensuing peace. But the need for uncoerced participation and restraint means democracy must ultimately be rooted in a people's desires and habits. This need is the substance of John Stuart Mill's comment on the cultural prerequisites for democracy (which I quote in my article). His comment did not concern "political purity" (as Elizabeth H. Hyman suggests). Neither Mill (nor I) postulated normative standards for judging actual institutions. He was instead concerned with the functional requisites of a particular kind of political system. There is nothing "complacent" about acknowledging that the U.S. has had such a system for more than two centuries. That is simply a fact. Miss Hyman should follow the advice of the late Martin Diamond and learn to face the facts, no matter how pleasant they may be.

Miss Hyman is even less sanguine than I am about the prospects for democracy in Latin America, though she is more optimistic about the Latin Americans' capacity to defend themselves against Communist incursions. Concerning her comments, I would like to note that although only Haiti, Paraguay, Guyana, and, perhaps, Cuba fit the "personalist" model today, the quite recent experience of Argentina with Peron and Peronismo and of Brazil with Goulart caution against concluding that personalist populism has been superseded by history. Moreover, authority may be transmitted through personal relations whether or not a society is headed by a maximum leader. It is only necessary that particularistic norms take precedence over universalistic standards, and this condition prevails in many Latin American bureaucracies.

I wholly agree with Miss Hyman that most Latin American regimes are competitive (I emphasized just

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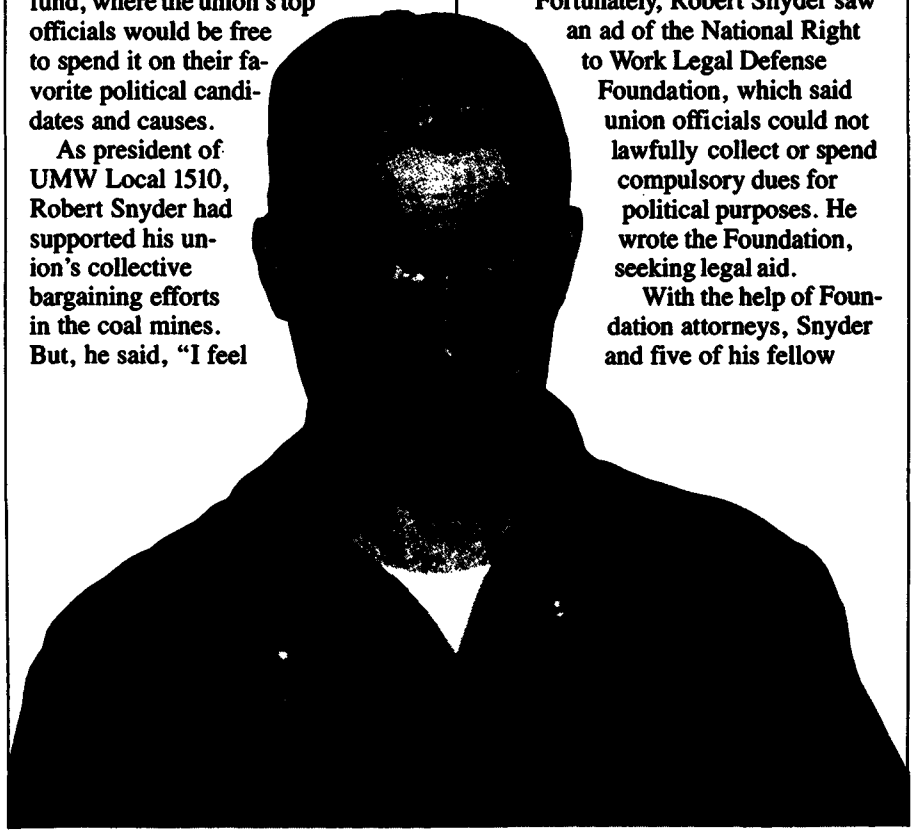

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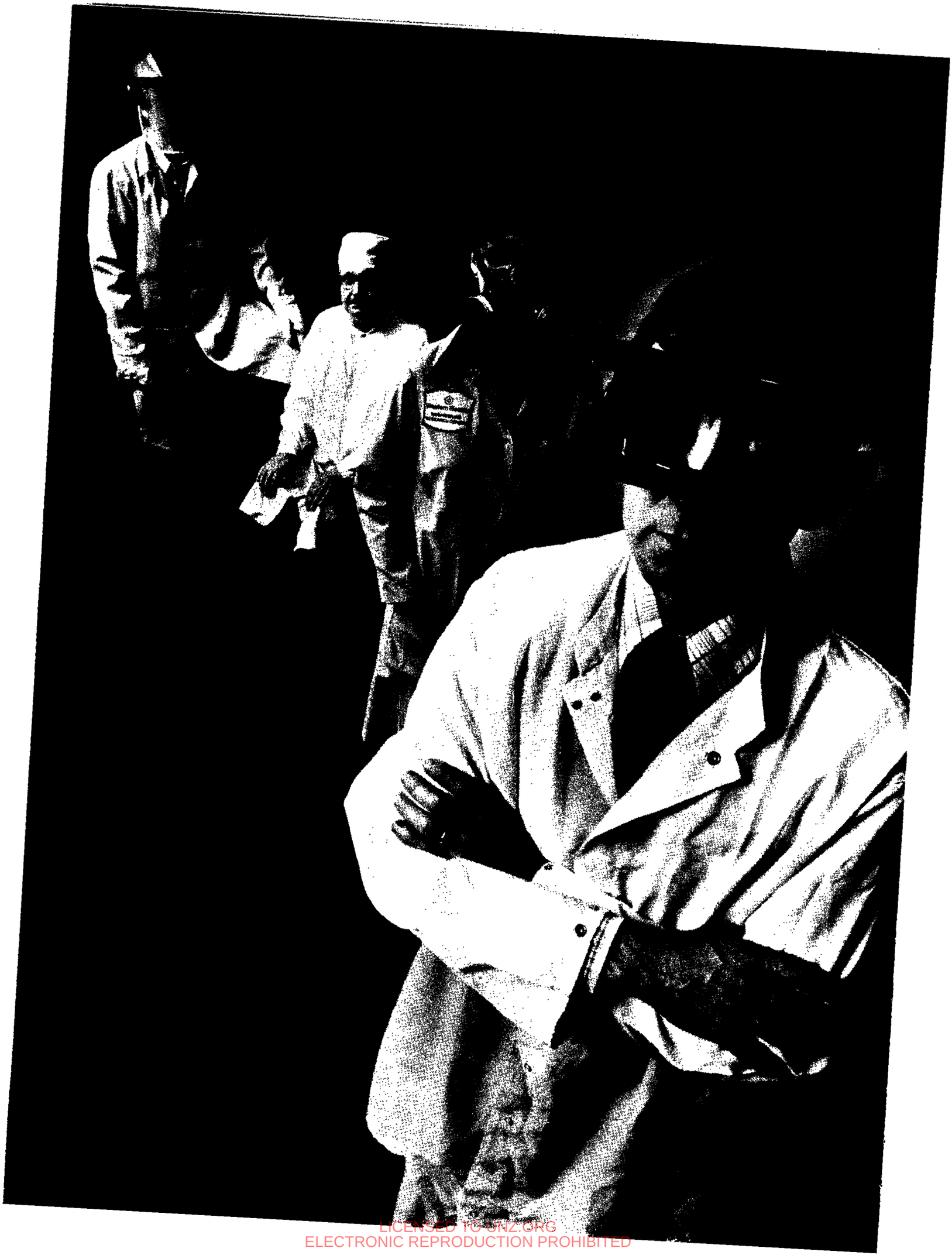

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this point a decade ago in a book on Argentine politics), and I also agree that Latin American governments regularly feature both a military and a civilian bureaucracy. Nonetheless, the institutions of government in Latin America tend to be weak, and are often incapable of effectively managing conflict and competition for power. That is, of course, the reason the governments are frequently toppled by force. The weak institutionalization and the instability of regimes that are characteristic of Latin American governments mean then that they are, in principle and in fact, more vulnerable to violence, both anomic and organized.

Miss Hyman is surely correct in saying that Latin American culture and traditions are not especially hospitable to Communism; but what indigenous culture or tradition is? Communist regimes do not come into being because their leaders persuade a majority of would-be subjects that Communism will fulfill the nation's aspirations. They come to power by coups (as in Czechoslovakia, Grenada, South Yemen); by invasions and/or military occupation (as in Eastern Europe, South Vietnam, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola, Ethopia); by guerrilla war (as in Cuba, China, North Vietnam, and, one fears, Nicaragua); or by a combination of these (as in Afghanistan and Angola)—always aided and abetted by the weapons and advice of the socialist fatherland. Occasionally Communist influence expands when the Soviets and/or Cubans and/or Chinese manage to persuade an incumbent ruler that there exists a harmony of interests between them (as in Guyana, Somali, Mozambique, and, one fears, Jamaica). Whether Central or South American governments will prove vulnerable to these tactics depends less on the indigenous tradition or the preferences of the masses than on the skill, ruthlessness, and external support of counter-elites. Neither Miss Hyman nor I can be certain about whether the governments of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (*inter alia*) might "evolve" into stable democracies, but the experience of Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Mexico indicates that such evolution is possible. The prior experience of each with constitutional democracy enhances the possibility of a return to government by consent, as does the fact that each is governed by relatively traditional authoritarians who generally respect the autonomy of other social institutions (e.g., family, economy, church).

Elliot Charney's letter is less concerned with the spread of democratic institutions than with the status of liberalism at home. He therefore reproaches me for purveying "the myth that liberals are blind to the realities of Soviet expansionist desires" and consequently "wrong" about all questions that involve U.S.-Soviet relations. I have until recently considered myself a "liberal." Even now, I forgo this characterization reluctantly and only because I believe, as charged, that too many prominent and powerful spokesmen for contemporary liberalism are blind to the realities of Soviet expansionism, and blind, too, to the requirements for self-defense which that expansionism imposes on the U.S. I'm afraid Mr. Charney's letter fuels my fears. In defense of "most liberals" he asserts that they are "as aware as anyone else of the lack of evidence that Marxist ideologues are benign democrats." But are they as aware as anyone of the superfluity of evidence that Communist ideologues breed malignant tyrannies? That is the question.

Finally, concerning the crowning achievement of the Carter administration's foreign policy, I insist only that the record is dismal. Neither the Panama Canal transfer nor the settlement with People's Republic is the sort of diplomatic "triumph" that I admire. In both cases we exchanged concrete for intangible goods: birds in the hand (control of the Canal, Taiwan's security) for birds in the bush (an enhanced reputation in Latin America, a new "realism" in international affairs). Maybe these exchanges will produce the promised benefits, maybe they won't. Certainly it is too early to celebrate.

Of course, I applaud President Carter's role in promoting the Egyptian-Israeli peace. But last summer, when I wrote my article, that agreement appeared to be on the verge of disintegrating. I later decided not to change my statement because it seems to me that despite President Carter's imaginative, facilitating role, most of the credit for the historic rapprochement must go to Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin, and to the governments they head. It is they who transcended entrenched enmity, they who assumed the risks.

I very much hope that before long it will be possible to give the Carter administration credit for some authentic successes in foreign policy. The violent attacks this nation has endured in Iran, Libya, and Pakistan; the limited and reluctant support available to us in that forum of "world opinion," the United Nations; the naked Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan; the continued Cuban-Soviet subversion of governments in the Caribbean, Central America, and Africa; and the President's own impending reelection contest just might lead him to abandon his romantic view of foreign policy and to adopt instead an attitude toward the world that is more like his attitude to domestic politics.

Black Anti-Semitism

To the Editor of Commentary:

The burden of Murray Friedman's argument that black anti-Semitism is growing ["Black Anti-Semitism on the Rise," October 1979] rests on the solid shoulders of polls. His forced interpretation of the surveys, however, leads one to suspect an *a priori* bias. He cites, without qualification, those surveys which indicate that black anti-Semitism exceeds white anti-Semitism. But in reporting the Harris data presented to the NCCJ showing Jews "less willing than whites" to have blacks move into their neighborhood or send their children to school with blacks, he is entangled in clumsy apologetics. Despite the contradictory data, Mr. Friedman proceeds to boast that Jews are "still more liberal than any other white group and are still strongly and consistently opposed to racism." Apparently unhappy with the non sequitur, he feels compelled to raise methodological questions regarding the fairness of the sample. The Harris pollsters, out of haste to find a cluster of Jews, or indolence, "over-selected" their respondents and thus contaminated their conclusions. Allegedly, they chose poorer, more Orthodox, less educated Jews whose opinions, Mr. Friedman gratuitously maintains, tend not to represent the total Jewish population. Would it ever dawn upon the author that the same organization's pollsters might have "over-selected" the black population and that the results could be unrepresentative of the total black population?.

The Los Angeles *Times* poll (September 9 through 14) indicated that

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positive black sympathy for Israel was in the clear majority and did not deviate from the equally positive response of the white population. By a wide 2 to 1 margin, blacks strongly disagreed with the assertion that Ambassador Young was forced to resign because of Jewish pressure. More often than not, it is the commentary, not the text, that governs the meaning of the story.

[Rabbi] HAROLD M. SCHULWEIS
Valley Beth Shalom
Encino, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The article by Murray Friedman on black anti-Semitism is excellent; it needed to be written (let me note here that I happen to be black). But I do not agree with Mr. Friedman's assertion that since World War II, anti-Semitism has declined in this country. The presence of anti-Semitism has probably been obscured by the rise of armed ethnicity in America. One can intensely and covertly despise others when one is encouraged to see one's own group or nationality as the focal point for all ethical and moral references. When this attitude is coupled with a kind of group self-righteousness, it becomes easy to hate in our society. Then, if you add all the other irritants of a scared and uncertain society, you have fertile soil for bigotry of all kinds to flourish.

Long ago, Elie Wiesel said, "It can happen here." I believe it.

ARTHUR C. BANKS, JR.
President, Greater Hartford
Community College
Hartford, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In an otherwise fine article, Murray Friedman, intentionally or unintentionally, continues the common confusion that equates quotas with affirmative action. Black leaders and the news media almost universally fall into this error. The alleged opposition of Jews to affirmative action follows from this unfounded equation.

The quota is only one of many forms of affirmative action, the one that is referred to as reverse discrimination by its opponents. It is, incidentally, opposed by the overwhelming majority of Americans, including most blacks.

Jews, along with many others, have actively favored such affirmative devices as special training to overcome environmental handicaps, CETA jobs, and remedial teaching programs. . . .

It is essential that blacks—and others—get the record straight on this bit of semantics. As things stand now, hostility is being exacerbated against those unjustifiably accused of opposing the interests of minority groups.

CHARLES COGEN
American Federation
of Teachers
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I feel that both the title and the contents of Murray Friedman's article serve more to intensify group fears than to foster constructive intelligence among readers who consult COMMENTARY for the clarification of issues.

Further, I question Mr. Friedman's cursory presentation of poll data showing bad marks given to one group by another and presenting the suspicions and negative opinions of one group about the other at a time when intergroup tensions are most sensitive.

It is axiomatic that fears can be generated and hate aroused simply by publicizing the negative remarks of authority figures. Even apart from the conflicts arising from the Andrew Young-PLO issue, black and Jewish leaders have been involved in a controversy over domestic goals. The two groups, each with a different ethnic history, disagree about the means by which affirmative action should be translated into more jobs and educational opportunities for blacks (without sacrificing the principle of merit in the workplace). Jewish spokesmen who have vociferously supported the protection of constitutional prohibitions against discrimination have been accused by black leaders of undermining the cause of affirmative action.

While genuine controversy exists among special-interest groups, it is my view that the media, in reporting the painful past and dwelling on demagoguery and bigotry, interfere with contributions by responsible agencies toward the resolution of America's pluralistic dilemmas.

MARTHA S. CHERKIS
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Murray Friedman's courageous effort to chronicle black anti-Semitism might have seemed to raise the issue of the proper conduct of future Jewish alliances. But after properly having complained of unjust accusations of Jews by blacks, he falls back on a kind of softness that undercuts his entire effort. The fallacy of his argument is that he chronicles the strains between Jews and blacks only to accept the premise that it is possible to reconstruct a past relationship, as though nothing he said about the strain makes any difference.

Nowhere is the fallacy more evident than at the end of his article, when he concludes with an example of "cooperation" between the groups on a vote in Philadelphia. There are two problems with that conclusion: one factual, the other conceptual.

Mr. Friedman speaks of a cooperative effort in the case where "Jews *joined* with blacks in preventing Frank J. Rizzo . . . from running for a third term as mayor of Philadelphia" (emphasis added). Yet in a study of that vote, Featherman and Rosenberg identify not only Jews and blacks as having voted heavily against the mayor, but large percentages of upper-income Wasps (85 per cent) as well. Would it not have been more accurate to speak of the combined vote of these three groups rather than speaking of "cooperation" of Jews and blacks? Furthermore, the statement that the Jews cooperated with blacks is also weakened by the fact that 31 per cent of the Jewish vote *supported* the Rizzo plan.

Mr. Friedman has made a convincing case that there has been a genuine break in the comprehensive political relationship between Jews and blacks; but he seems to be struggling with what appear to be the rather harsh implications of his own chronicle. He resolves the difficulty by calling for a revival of things past. That there are barriers to a renewal such as he desires is evident from the materials contained in his article. He observes, for example, that while in previous years survey research revealed that education was positively correlated with a decline in anti-Semitism, this does not appear to be the case with many of the current well-educated black leaders. . . .

When Harris polls indicate that 81 per cent of their sample of blacks believe that Jews choose money over people, we have something to be concerned about. While it is certainly not clear in what way this represents anti-Semitism, it does indicate something about the changing nature of attitudes. If in

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the past Jews and blacks were able to be allies because of their analogous historical experiences with prejudice and discrimination, today the fact that Jews as a group are better off socioeconomically seems to be the basis of a conflict. It appears that a good number of black leaders now perceive Jews as oligarchs who act as partisans for a system in which the rich keep what they have. What we are seeing, on a small scale, is the kind of class-oriented politics that has fueled political conflicts throughout the world. . . .

One gets the impression that Mr. Friedman believes that if only some black leaders would come forward and repudiate the radical and anti-Semitic accusations, we could get on with being cooperative again. Yet it is not very clear what the actual effects of black leaders such as Bayard Rustin and Vernon Jordan speaking out against Jesse Jackson and Reverend Lowery will be. What impact does Mr. Friedman expect national leaders to have, particularly on less vocal, but nonetheless equally ambitious, black leaders at the local level? It would seem that repudiation cannot suffice to overcome the impact of the past decade of rising anti-Semitism. No better evidence of this can be given than that which Mr. Friedman himself provides: his appreciation of the efforts of Martin Luther King, Jr. in repudiating earlier anti-Semitic attacks reveals in fact that King had little effect on silencing those attacks. They continued in spite of his efforts. . . .

Thus, Mr. Friedman's solution makes little political sense, in spite of the psychological solace it can provide for liberals. First, it fails to distinguish between a healthy pluralism and an unhealthy one. Second, it fails to acknowledge adequately that it is not so much that Jews have changed (as Malcolm X had charged) but that the rules of the political order have changed. . . .

But Mr. Friedman does not speak this way. On the contrary, he merely demands the elimination of public anti-Semitism so that cooperation can continue. But in saying this he indicates that his only hope for the future is that all parties in the game of plural politics will persist in playing the game by the old rules. He thus seems more concerned with political methodology and with institutional arrangements than with the character and the ends of politics. In the end, he retreats to that generous liberalism that places Jews in the position of the weak addressing the strong. . . .

MARTIN J. PLAX

Cleveland, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As blacks gradually take their place in the mainstream of American life, it must be expected that they will adopt the attitudes of the majority, albeit as new entrants, in exaggerated form. The expression of anti-Semitism . . . voiced by some black leaders . . . is thus perhaps a better indicator of the attitude of white America than the surveys cited by Murray Friedman. . . .

KURT G. STRAUSS

Tucson, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Murray Friedman's article on black anti-Semitism quite perceptively identifies Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* as one of the major sources of the current anti-Semitic rhetoric. One of Cruse's main theses was that Jews have no right to protest against anti-Semitism since they themselves hold prejudices and insist on retaining their own "exclusivity." To buttress his point, Cruse trotted out Karl Marx, whom he called "an emancipated Jew," and quoted him: "When the Jew demands emancipation from the Christian state, he asks that the Christian state give up its religious prejudices. Does he, the Jew, give up his religious prejudices? What right, therefore, has he to demand of others the abdication of their religion?" Karl Marx's attitudes about Jews have been the subject of much controversy, but what Cruse quoted is actually Marx's formulation of Bruno Bauer's opinion—which Marx went on to refute. Sloppiness, incompetence, or dishonesty?

Cruse obviously bore enormous hostility to Jews, nurtured by his experience in the Communist party. He resented what he considered their "dominance" of the party and charged them with "the great brainwashing of Negro radical intellectuals." Indeed, his animus was so extreme that he revived the hoary myth propagated by such people as Charles Lindbergh: "Under Jewish Communist prodding, the Communist party took up the anti-Hitler crusade in the late 1930's."

And this is the book that Christopher Lasch in the *New York Review of Books* said "will survive as a monument of historical analysis." To be fair, however, a few reviewers did call Cruse to task. The *Saturday Review* chided him for being unfair to Jews and in the New York *Times* Thomas Lask criticized the book and pointed out its special hostility to Jews. That so viciously anti-Semitic a book should have elicited such fulsome praise from Lasch and others, that its blatant errors of elementary research should have been overlooked by so many, however, is testimony to how badly some intellectuals betrayed their calling in the 1960's.

HARVEY KLEHR

Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Murray Friedman's stirring article on the changing relations between blacks and Jews in this country contains one fallacy. The decline in anti-Semitism in this country in recent years is not so much related, as he claims, to "the rise in education among Americans generally" as it is to World War II and Jewish assimilation. . . .

One would like to believe that improved education reduces bigotry, thereby implying that anti-Semitism is the disease of the ignorant and that there is hope for a cure. But I suspect that the relationship is far less certain. . . . Unfortunately, education does not necessarily imply a rational or "enlightened" perspective, or the elimination of prejudices.

In fact, judging from recent trends at American and European universities, the chief feature of university people and students is the haste with which they embrace radical ideas. . . . If anti-Semitism should become chic, the university population, true to its recent history, will probably be in the intellectual vanguard.

PHILIP S. KUSHNER

New Haven, Connecticut

MURRAY FRIEDMAN writes:

Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis criticizes the fact that I accept 1978 Harris survey materials on rising black hostility to Jews and not Harris data on anti-black feelings among Jews, as well as my assertion that Jews continue to remain the most liberal of white groups. The reasons for my views are set forth in my article, the Los Angeles *Times* poll notwithstanding, and appear to me to be quite persuasive. Let me add only the following: in an exhaustive examination of some

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200 questions from 1948 to the present, Alan M. Fisher, writing in the May/June 1979 issue of *Society*, comes to the same conclusions. He notes, for example, that Jews are opposed to the idea that "blacks shouldn't push where they aren't wanted" as well as to racial and sexual discrimination, particularly in job hiring and university admissions. That most Jews espouse the principle of merit and oppose quotas is an indication less of racial antipathy, I believe, than of Jewish support for racial equality. I find it odd, indeed, that Rabbi Schulweis grasps at the *only* survey that suggests that Jews are more bigoted than other groups and mocks my assertion that they have remained determinedly liberal, at least prior to the Andrew Young affair, in the face of so much information that contradicts his position.

Arthur C. Banks, Jr., who I am glad approves of my article, is unwilling to accept the assertion that anti-Semitism in this country has declined generally since World War II. It is difficult for either of us to prove the point. All the survey-research material I have seen and some twenty-five years' experience as an intergroup-relations worker lead me to this conclusion. Given the pressures that are now mounting from a variety of directions, however, I certainly agree that Jews should remain wary.

I may not have been clear enough, as Charles Cogen's letter suggests, in making a distinction between Jewish response to affirmative action and quota programs. This, too, is an illustration of the problem Jews and liberals generally face. The fact is that most Jewish organizations have supported affirmative-action programs of the type Mr. Cogen mentions, a position now also endorsed by the Supreme Court. While these organizations oppose the allocation of a fixed number of places for a particular racial grouping, they are not even opposed to quotas if a record of discrimination by an institution has been proven to exist. In short, Jewish opposition to affirmative action has been highly exaggerated. Nevertheless, there has been no softening of attacks on Jews.

I could not disagree more with Martha S. Cherkis. Jews in recent years have been subjected to bullying tactics at the hands of a class of better-educated and higher-status blacks and it is a "head-in-the-sand" approach to suggest that by identifying this situation my article "intensifies group fear." Jewish security and, in fact, the broader well-being of the community requires recognizing and facing up to these unpleasant facts.

This brings me to Martin J. Plax's letter, which raises the most important question: the future of Jewish alliances. Mr. Plax argues that a fundamental change has occurred in black-Jewish relations and questions whether it is even desirable to attempt to restore the old alliance. Granted that the rise of an important black middle class, the radicalization of many of its young, and a politics of black rage pose real problems—nevertheless, I believe that the effort should be made to work with blacks. A society made up of many groups requires coalitions among them in order to achieve group goals and order and progress in the society generally. However, the conditions under which Jews join in alliances with blacks in the coming months and years must be different from the sentimental liberalism that has guided us in recent years. Jews need to be considerably more hard-headed and willing to risk confrontations when fundamental Jewish and community interests are involved. Thus, we have to recognize and come down hard on automatic anti-Israel positions and anti-Semitic posturing that even moderate blacks have so easily slipped into. Moreover, there should be no retreat (despite what one major Jewish leader has suggested) in our opposition to quotas even as we support legitimate affirmative-action programs. Finally, we have a right to expect and demand that differences on matters like quotas be debated with dignity and restraint.

Having said this, I believe, also, that Jews should not retreat from the struggle against the problems of poverty, discrimination, and racial bigotry that continue to exist in our society. Inflation and recession strike hardest at low-income groups who are disproportionately black. It would be morally reprehensible to take out on the socially maimed our displeasure at those who have acted irresponsibly.

I know that this "two-track" approach is a complicated one and may be, for all I know, psychologically impossible. In the kind of society in which we live, however, it is the only way we can function as Jews—and as decent human beings.

Women Rabbis?

To the Editor of Commentary:

Ruth R. Wisse's article, "Women as Conservative Rabbis?" [October 1979], is a delight to read. More than any other analysis to date, it has exposed the sophistry of the report of the Commission for the Study of the Ordination of Women as Rabbis. As a concerned outsider, Mrs. Wisse has done the Conservative movement a great service, for with her objective eye she has shown the superficial reasoning which pervades the report. She has also done American Jewry a great service by showing just show deep the current malaise of Conservative Judaism really is, a fact which will no doubt be denied by many of its "official" spokesmen.

Mrs. Wisse shows that by taking the definition of the rabbinate out of the domain of *Halakhah*, the commission has made the role of the rabbi essentially meaningless by undermining any possible authority it might have in principle, let alone exercise in practice. For, as she has been so astute in pointing out, the report leaves "the impression of a meaningless body of tradition whose forms are adhered to when there is not a shrewd enough argument to break them down." After such an undermining of tradition, how could anyone committed to that same tradition—male or female—aspire to such an amorphous and nebulous vocation? I think it is safe to say that in the *halakhic* system the question of authority precedes the question of rights. Today the most basic question *halakhists* must face is the erosion of the authority of the Law. Only after this question has been dealt with can a discussion of the rights of various individuals and groups be cogent.

The commission did not make available to Mrs. Wisse, or anyone else for that matter, the testimony of those who oppose the ordination of women as rabbis. I for one (I am vice chairman of the Committee for the Preservation of Tradition within the Rabbinical Assembly) pointed out that the rabbinate *is halakhically* constituted, viz., a rabbi is one appointed to adjudicate questions of Jewish law. The consensus of *halakhic* tradition is quite precise in determining just who may and who may not function in this essentially rabbinic role. (My testimony was published in *Sh'ma*, January 19, 1979.)

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Sincere proponents of the ordination of women as rabbis should take little comfort from the commission's report, which, as Mrs. Wisse clearly shows, does not take seriously enough the very context of a truly effective rabbinic role. We traditionalist Conservatives do, however, take great comfort from Mrs. Wisse's article, for it expresses our deep reservations more lucidly than we ourselves have been able to do heretofore.

[Rabbi] David Novak
Congregation Beth El
Norfolk, Virginia

To the Editor of Commentary:

It is fortunate that Ruth R. Wisse, in "Women as Conservative Rabbis?," presents the justifications for women's ordination given in the commission report before she criticizes them; fortunate because this clues her readers in on Mrs. Wisse's exaggerated and unfair reading of the report and its significance.

Mrs. Wisse complains that the commission did not engage in a full-blown discussion of the "conflicting trends and choices of modern feminism," did not declare its final decision on such issues as whether biology influences ontology, or [whether] social conditioning [is] the only determinant of sex roles," and finally, that the commission did not delineate the precise "boundaries of accommodation between traditional Judaism and contemporary feminism." Yet this commission, a heterogeneous, part-time deliberative body of experts and laymen, whose responsibility it was to reach a consensus and write a report and recommendation concerning women rabbis in the Conservative movement, could not, and indeed should not have been expected to, write at length on such matters. It is entirely unrealistic to expect a panel such as this to reach definitive—or even tentative—conclusions on highly controversial issues at the frontiers of anthropology, sociology, and religious philosophy.

More important, however, debating and deciding such issues would have been at the very least unnecessary, and quite probably a hindance, to the task the commission had before it, which was to find a just and fair answer to the demands of many qualified women who wish to enter the Conservative rabbinate, an answer which could be defended within the *halakhic*

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system and which would not cause unnecessary divisiveness within an increasingly polarized Conservative movement. Clearly, the commission members realized, as do most judges, that attempting to tackle every relevant issue in a given dispute only makes its resolution more difficult, and undermines the unifying and consolidating force which a briefer decision might otherwise have. No doubt Mrs. Wisse also would have found fault with the Supreme Court's relatively brief opinion in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* on the grounds that it too treated an issue vast in its implications without discoursing at length on each of them. If Mrs. Wisse really wishes exhaustive treatments of the broad, fundamental questions she raises, then she knows where to turn: to the recent proliferation of scholarly writing by religious and secular thinkers, and not to a document essentially political in its function.

Mrs. Wisse's criticism of the non-definitive character of the commission report is all the more remarkable in view of her own indirect and evasive discussion of the merits of the issue of women as rabbis. She admits that "the talmudic sages made not a single attempt to formulate a general principle governing the status of women" and goes on to state that the *Halakhah*'s varying demands upon men and women can be "endlessly reinterpreted." But then she adds obliquely that those demands "cannot be wholly eliminated without calling into question . . . the binding nature of the law itself," and concludes with an ominous warning that

> the Conservative movement as a whole may . . . find it increasingly difficult, when the distinctions between women and men have no known consequence or meaning, to maintain Judaism's unyielding differentiations between wool and linen, between milk and meat, between Sabbath and week, between Israel and the Nations.

Perhaps because she knows better than directly to accuse the commission of heading down the path of Reform, Mrs. Wisse resorts to this sort of side-swipe. If anything is clear from the commission report, it is its firm commitment to maintain the vitality of *halakhic* Judaism, not to repudiate it or dilute it. Those who favor the full participation of women in the Conservative religious leadership do so out of a conviction that the uniqueness and beauty of Jewish life can be enhanced, and Sabbath and *kashrut* observance strengthened, by permitting capable women as well as men to lead us in these pursuits, rather than relegating the former to a position which does not accord—as it once did—with the social, political, and ethical norms of contemporary life.

All living legal systems must confront the frequently voiced, reactionary cry of those who fear that adaptation to new circumstances will enervate the core values which the legal system reveres. Justices Brandeis and Holmes answered those cries in the context of the need for a more flexible understanding of our Constitution. The rabbis of the Talmud answered similar cries centuries earlier emanating from Sadducee and Karaite circles in the context of the need for a more flexible understanding of divine law. It is that rabbinic tradition within which the advocates of women's ordination seek to achieve their goal.

MARK B. ROTENBERG
Columbia University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse regrets that the Commission for the Study of the Ordination of Women as Rabbis failed to examine the "conflicting trends and choices within modern feminism that would have a critical bearing on the question." That was not the commission's only failure. We also failed to examine faith and prayer in the modern world, the difficulties of the modern clergy, the modern crisis of authority, and several other modern things that would have a critical bearing on the question. Mrs. Wisse faults the commission for having written a short story instead of a novel. I signed on for a short story. The other members probably did, too.

Mrs. Wisse hints that some feminists are antinomian about sex and that many are Jews. She is right. *Public Opinion* (January/February 1979) reports that in answer to a questionnaire 75 per cent of Christian women opposed adultery, and only 48 per cent of Jewish women did. But what has that to do with women as rabbis? Most Jewish men do not observe the Sabbath and *kashrut*. Such men will not be admitted to the Jewish Theological Seminary. Neither will women who do not observe the Sabbath and *kashrut*. If the time has come for the Seminary to ask applicants whether they think the Seventh Commandment has been repealed, men as well as women applicants should be asked.

In the name of the tradition, Mrs. Wisse reproves the commission for thinking of the rabbinate not as a "religious vocation" but as a profession. "Religious vocation" is Christian. When Catholics use "religious" as a noun they mean monks and nuns, and when they say there has been a decline in vocations they mean fewer men want to become priests and women to become nuns. Protestant ministers have heard a call. Max Weber taught that Protestantism made a vocation, a calling, of work.

Jews knew of no special religious vocation, because all had heard the call to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The only purpose of the European yeshivah was to help students advance in *talmud Torah* and virtue. The rabbinate was a profession, and to obtain a license to practice it—the so-called *semikhah*—you had to learn professional things, like how to determine whether an egg is kosher, not taught in the yeshivah. Similarly, in America the J.D. degree does not entitle you to practice law. For that you have to pass the bar examination.

A Christian clergyman is "reverend," to be revered. He is called pastor—shepherd—or priest. Mrs. Wisse's classical rabbi was called *resh metivta*, head of the yeshivah (in his case, something like "honorary professor of law"), and *av bet din*, presiding justice. Nor did religious authority depend on holding a rabbinical license. The greatest authority in modern times was the Gaon of Vilna, who had no *semikhah* and had not even studied long in a yeshivah.

Mrs. Wisse would have it that the commission's recommendation excludes women from "the great lineage of the rabbinate." Nothing in the recommendation excludes a woman, any more than a man, from the lineage of the Conservative rabbinate: to name only Seminary alumni, Boaz Cohen, Solomon Goldman, Milton Steinberg, and—*yibbadelu lehayyim*—Louis Finkelstein and Mordecai M. Kaplan.

Mrs. Wisse's intemperate language is remarkable in a scholar.

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Not for her any shading in portraying "the reality of the contemporary congregational leader," too abject for her to call him a rabbi. He "all too often has to court his parishioners"—an ecclesiastical word—"like an auditioning actor, opinion pollster, and offer direction with all the authority of a horse in harness." I know some rabbis, too, and I do not recognize the pitiful creatures of her portrait.

If her nostalgia is odd in one whose field is Yiddish literature—Mendele does not encourage illusions about the goodness of the good old days and the good old ways—in a learned woman the nostalgia is doubly odd. The Gaon of Vilna thought that women should know not Bible but Bible tales, and not in Hebrew but in Yiddish. In this century, Rabbi Jacob David Wilowsky was a spiritual descendant of the Gaon so eminent as to be known by acronym—the Ridwas. His will, which he made public, contains this clause:

> My dear and beloved sons, I do not need to urge you to give proper education to your sons, for I know that of your own accord you will educate them in Torah and piety. Yet I command you that you should command your sons, and they theirs, that they should be careful not to teach their daughters Torah, only jargon, so that they will be able to read [homilies good enough for women].

("Jargon" was dismissive for "Yiddish.")

I think I understand why Mrs. Wisse should disdain Conservative Judaism. For the herd of independent minds in the academy it would be disturbingly unconventional not to disdain something so "Middle American," as she calls it. What I do not understand is why a woman intellectual should be beside herself with rage at a departure from the Ridwas's tradition, which excludes women not only from the rabbinate but also from Torah itself, and intellect. Satmar agrees with the Ridwas. So does Mrs. Wisse when she prates of the "feminization of the rabbinate."

MILTON HIMMELFARB
White Plains, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse may have appropriate grounds for her scorn of the ambiguities of the Conservative movement's report on the ordination of women as rabbis. But her own obliquely phrased conclusions conceal a position for which she apparently did not have the courage to argue—a stand against any change in Jewish life, a resistance to any "incursions of modernity." For her, the Conservative movement's choices are adaptation, which equals "*weakening* the religious way of life it was founded to conserve," or tradition, which means giving up merely "*immediate* relevance to contemporary American society" (emphasis added). Assuming such problematic interpretations of both tradition and adaptation, she not only exposes inconsistencies in the rabbis' argument, but insinuates a denunciation of women's participation in Jewish religious life. That participation she labels "social androgyny," "the feminization of the rabbinate," anathema to her version of "traditional Judaism." In her conclusion, Mrs. Wisse finally emerges as yet another apologist for the restricted role of women in Judaism, though on peculiar grounds. Apparently Judaism's "ability to create an alternative model of virility, one which depended on intellectual and spiritual prowess rather than political and physical might," is threatened by women rabbis—because Jewish men cannot feel themselves distinctively male if women too reveal "intellectual and spiritual prowess" in Jewish traditional terms? From such sophistry she rises (or descends) to the grand finale of that hoary cry—the fence around Torah; if one distinction is abandoned, all of Jewish life collapses. Fortunately, experience is demonstrating that the full participation of women in traditional Jewish religious observance, far from obliterating the differentiation between Israel and the Nations, can only serve to strengthen distinctively Jewish religious and communal life.

JUDITH A. KATES
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When Ruth R. Wisse undertook to dissect the statements of the Conservative community on the ordination of women as rabbis, I hoped she might have something else in mind; one might have asked the Conservative leaders to avow much more clearly their support for the full participation of women in Jewish life. Their vacillating tone is perhaps due to the kinds of criticisms they knew the Orthodox would level at them—ancient, oft-repeated arguments in an unresolved quarrel. But Mrs. Wisse turns out to be one of those unsympathetic critics who does not want to encourage, but attack, the Conservative tendency. She wants "tradition" as she interprets it to predominate; she wants to preserve the "unyielding differentiations between wool and linen, between milk and meat, between Sabbath and week, between Israel and the Nations"—and, of course, between men and women. Once those are gone, what would be left? she asks, as if what Judaism has sustained over centuries rests wholly on these differences rigidly defined and as if all these differences are equal in importance. Without them would no history, prayer, theology be left to us? Mrs. Wisse seems to define Jewish tradition only by those distinctions which have caused it endless quarrelsome dispute, much of it fruitless and decadent. If the distinction between men and women is abandoned, she asks, how can women then be appropriate defenders of the rest of the distinctions which she finds indispensable?

What she cannot credit in her argument is the fact that we have survived as much by changing in the present as by clinging stubbornly to the past. If we had not always been adapting and using the strengths of history in that adaptation, surely we would not still be here. At a time when women are assuming increasing responsibility in every sphere of secular life—in the economy, in politics, in education—it would be perilous to avoid shouldering greater responsibility in the religious world. Such neglect only encourages the kind of frustration that alienates people entirely from the Jewish community, an outcome that none of us will want to risk.

JUDITH B. WALZER
Cambridge, Massachusetts

RUTH R. WISSE writes:

My thanks to Rabbi David Novak for his generous letter. Though pleased by his compliment, I regret if mine is indeed the most lucid critical report on the issue. My betters should be doing better.

Since Mark B. Rotenberg had previously declared himself wholly in favor of the commission report, and since Milton Himmelfarb is one of its several distinguished sig-

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natories, I am not surprised by their objections to my objections, though I certainly am by their tone. Mr. Rotenberg seems to accuse me of stealth and indirection; Mr. Himmelfarb, calling *me* intemperate, hones a personal edge to his letter which is disappointing in one who has long been my model of civilized debate.

Both letters begin on the same note: the commission report should not have been expected to deal with feminism or the question of women in Judaism because that was not its mandate. Mr. Himmelfarb thinks I called for a novel instead of a short story, and Mr. Rotenberg trots out a legal analogy from the "real courts" to show his stuff. Perhaps deliberately, they distort my criticism. I was not calling for something extraneous to the report, only for a rudimentary definition of its own terminology. In setting out "The Issue," that is, the reasons for reexamining this subject, the *report itself* invokes "general feminist debates" and "general feminist issues," about which it tells us, "*there was plainly very little to discuss*" (emphasis added). The language of the report draws attention to its own obfuscation, and to the unwillingness of the commission members to clarify their own premises. Would the commission have been prepared to argue for changes in Sabbath observance by invokng "general ideas about rest"?

Whatever its reluctance to say so, the report argues for the elimination of any extra-biological distinctions between men and women in Judaism. Since traditional Judaism appears to hold very different views about the social ideals most fitting for men and women, the point is hardly extraneous.

I am touched by the firm convictions of those like Mr. Rotenberg who feel that women's ordination will enhance "the uniqueness and beauty of Jewish life." Unfortunately, I rather suspect the opposite. While it is always dashing to invoke "flexibility" against "reaction," this rhetoric in modern times is not helpful. The vital impulse of the Conservative movement, lest we forget, lay in its challenge to infinite "flexibility." Its very purpose in coming into organizational life was to conserve a tradition many Jews considered outworn and recalcitrant ("sexist" was not then in fashion), even at the risk of being accused of "reaction." In terms of his own movement, Mr. Rotenberg's idea of advancement might more easily be interpreted as retreat.

Mr. Himmelfarb has read into my article both more and less than it contains. If he finds a "hint" that some feminists are antinomian, he may as easily find a hint that some feminists are antidisestablishmentarian. I wrote nothing about feminists. Nevertheless, his point about adultery is interesting.

He accuses me further of caricaturing the rabbinate. But the gist of my paragraph was precisely the reverse—to caricature what the rabbi "all too often has to" become. I was, in effect, accusing the commission report of holding the rabbinate in too low an esteem, and I was accusing congregations of stifling rabbinic authority. I am happy to reiterate the point.

Based on my use of the word "vocation," Mr. Himmelfarb lectures me on the differences between Judaism and Christianity (a subject on which I always read him with gratitude). I agree that the word is unfortunate, but less for etymological than for current semantic reasons. Since "vocation" can be a synonym for "profession," it ought not to have been used as its antonym. The point of my criticism, however, survives the infelicity.

Those who argue for women's ordination delight in pointing out that the Gaon of Vilna had no *semikhah*, that Rabbi Isaac Elkhanan did not lead services, and that the Lubavitcher *rebbe* does not make a practice of signing divorce writs. The case for women as rabbis is made negatively, by showing what men never did as rabbis anyway, and don't necessarily do today. But for all the varieties of meaning in the term "rabbi," from the Middle Ages onward the Jews do seem to have had religious authorities who assumed or were assigned responsibility for the ritual, legal, social, and occasionally even political leadership of the community. These roles grew out of the obligations binding on Jewish men and women, but more particularly on men. Despite the relative weakness of these roles today, the rabbis are still the best potential religious leaders of Diaspora Jewry. Arguing for women as rabbis by conceding the limitations and finiteness of the role, the commission report is trying to accommodate a rapidly changing social scene by sacrificing the authentic vision of the Conservative movement and the potential authority of its rabbinate. I suggest that this supreme pragmatism is not likely to inspire.

Mr. Himmelfarb's crescendo conclusion leaves me nostalgic, all right—for the balanced thinker he used to be. Distortions on the basis of selective evidence, so fashionable nowadays, can be made by one and all. My own version of the recent Jewish past differs somewhat from his version of holy truth. I myself am the descendant of two matriarchies, one of which carries its founder's proud name. My paternal great-grandmother founded the family business in which my generation (after due migration) is still employed. My maternal grandmother, daughter of a wealthy property owner (her mother), ran a large publishing house and raised ten children. My understanding of the Jewish reality is that women, all duly pious, were accorded all the power, while men were relegated to the synagogue for their creative diversion. So much for the poor Ridwas's petulant will: he was only trying to get even, *nebach*.

Finally, I could argue with Mr. Himmelfarb as to which of us "disdains." It would not have occurred to me that "Middle America," my adored heartland, would be a more pejorative term than "intellectual." And if the weeks spent poring over the commission report and its ancillary materials are a sign of disdain for Conservative Judaism, I should like to know what constitutes respect. Strangest of all is Mr. Himmelfarb's idea of my "rage." The Satmar and I are actually more surprised than angry by his discovery of our elective affinities. I had tried to keep this budding ideological alliance under wraps, but apparently nothing can escape the eye of a truly discriminating observer!

To Judith A. Kates and Judith B. Walzer, my fellow members of the academy (the "herd" which Mr. Himmelfarb may be surprised to find stampeding in his direction rather than mine), I have been a disappointment. They had hoped I would put forth their ideas, whereas I have only been true to mine. I found the commission report favoring the ordination of women as rabbis to be weak and unconvincing; they agree, but because it does not go far enough. I suggested that traditional Judaism may yet have valuable things to say on the subject of men and women. They are satisfied that it does not. Of course, the question of tradition is only relevant to those who consider

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themselves bound by it. I raised it within the context of the article because of the emphasis it is accorded by the Conservative movement itself. From the nature of their remarks, I am not sure Miss Kates and Mrs. Walzer are addressing the same problem, namely, the process of adaptation *within* a traditionalist movement.

If I believed, as Mrs. Walzer does, that "frustration" with "rigid" Judaism alienates people from the Jewish community, I might take her argument more seriously. She may have been right in 1880, but she has the facts backward today. Those alienated from Judaism are those whose Judaism is already indistinguishable from current fashion. If all the many phases of Judaism's adaptation have demonstrably *not* enhanced it, how can one still argue for reform on those grounds? It would be more honest to say that despite the fact that it will weaken Judaism, women should be admitted to the rabbinate. At least this formulation could be supported by some historical evidence.

Miss Kates claims that I am actually arguing (if I had but the courage to admit it) for the whole fence around Torah, against any changes in Jewish life. Alas, with all the courage I lack, I could not live up to her accusation. There are changes in Judaism I would support, some of them regarding the status of women. But in each case I would want to calculate the probable damages against the anticipated benefits (a) to the whole cloth of Judaism; (b) to Jewish men and women. I am not convinced that Judaism will be improved by making its religious responsibilities equally binding on men and women (a precondition for the ordination of women as rabbis). That there are many women today who reach out for those responsibilities I well know. That some assume them voluntarily, and often passionately, I also know. But the decision to make them binding on all women can only, in the long run, weaken their importance altogether.

Since the proposed change affects the structure of Judaism and Jewish life more profoundly than any yet introduced by the Conservative movement, and since 150 years of adaptation have shown some of the losses as well as the gains Judaism can incur by such changes, a conservative posture on this issue seems to me altogether arguable within a conservative movement.

Apocalypse Now

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his commentary on *Apocalypse Now* [Movies, "Coppola's Folly," October 1979], Richard Grenier commits a common critical fallacy which at present seems prevalent in popular journalism relative to appraisals of Coppola's ambitious project. . . . [He] focuses on Coppola's egomania, pomposity, and pseudointellectual aspirations and proceeds to bolster this thesis with misinformation about . . . the film's production which has little to do with an objective evaluation of the work itself. Given the single-mindedness of many such recent attacks, it seems necessary to correct some assertions so we can proceed with a reasonable dissection of the film's aesthetics and philosophy.

Mr. Grenier states that a mark of Coppola's intellectual caprice is the release of the 35mm. and 70mm. versions with two separate endings. This is simply incorrect—the two prints are identical except for a set of ornate titles added to the 35mm. film in general release. Related to this issue is Grenier's notion of Coppola's fixation on the lap-dissolve, with the implication that Coppola deluded himself into believing he reinvented the technique. Clearly this is not what is stated in Mrs. Coppola's book, *Notes*, nor are the particular dissolves used all that common in recent film history. Coppola stated he used a video unit for effectuating his dissolves and, indeed, the method, as evidenced in the film, is most unusual.

Finally, Mr. Grenier belabors the already overemphasized account of the mishaps involved in the production of *Apocalypse Now*. Surely if Coppola had a preference he would have avoided a typhoon that destroyed his sets, a heart attack that almost killed an actor, and the snobbery of the critical community suggesting such problems were either orchestrated or in some sense emblematic of the solipsism of the director's enterprise, paralleled only by Von Stroheim's *Greed*.

The issue of *The Golden Bough* and intellectual pretension notwithstanding, genuine criticism of a work cannot exist amid the furor over superficial concerns. Mr. Grenier would do well to follow the dictum he quotes from T. S. Eliot regarding the necessary detachment of the artist from his work, which would seem to apply to a critic's reading of same. The scope of *Apocalypse Now* at this juncture may appear inflated because of our fixation on the artist's mystique; certainly the perpetuation of this mystique becomes as much the fault of journalists as industry insiders. Until we can dispense with such concerns, the simplicity of the film—the story of how moral consciousness disintegrates in the face of war, especially the . . . general confusion that was Vietnam—will continue to elude serious scholarship.

C. B. SHARRETT
Villanova University
Villanova, Pennsylvania

RICHARD GRENIER writes:

I must be frank. I find C. B. Sharrett's letter so jargonbound and incoherent that I am not even certain of what he is saying, and when I can decipher his meaning I can rarely connect it to the article I wrote. Whatever does he mean by "solipsism"? "Mystique"? How does one "orchestrate" a typhoon?

Mr. Sharrett writes, "nor are the particular dissolves used all that common in recent film history." But that is exactly what I said, going so far as to state, "For two decades now motion pictures have been in the Age of the Straight Cut." Mr. Sharrett writes, "Surely if Coppola had a preference he would have avoided a typhoon that destroyed his sets, a heart attack that almost killed an actor . . . ." But who could possibly think otherwise? I would probably not even have mentioned these disasters if Coppola himself had not drawn them into the arena of public discussion, pushing them forward eagerly as evidence that he had lived through experiences fully comparable to those recounted in *Apocalypse Now*.

Mr. Sharrett seems to be suggesting throughout his letter that, in the classic expression, I should review "the work, not the man." But once again I wholeheartedly agree with him. All my criticism of the film is grounded entirely in the film itself (which I feel went terribly wrong). But when Coppola, in all his public statements, invites me to peruse the circumstances of his film's making in order to gather penetrating insights into his art, I certainly feel free to accept his invitation. Moreover, when a director quotes extensively in a film from the works of T.S. Eliot, and portentously displays in this

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film as clues to its meaning copies of Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Jessie K. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, I hardly think I am invading his privacy if I read these works to see if he has understood them. (He has not.)

Wading through Mr. Sharrett's verbiage, I can find only three points clearly enough put to attempt to rebut:

1. Mr. Sharrett writes that my statement that *Apocalypse Now* was released with two different endings is "simply incorrect," affirming that the two prints are "identical except for a set of ornate titles added to the 35 mm. film in general release." I must point out to Mr. Sharrett that the "ornateness" he is witnessing behind the extended closing titles in the 35 mm. version is nothing less than an air strike by the U.S. Air Force destroying by napalm and high explosives the locus of all the last scenes of the movie, and this in elaborate and specific detail. If Mr. Sharrett feels that creeping away in a boat at night leaving a demented jungle kingdom intact is "identical" with destroying it by napalm, there is little I can do for him. I can only agree with Coppola, his distributors, his exhibitors, his publicists, the trade publications, and every journalistic account I have seen, that they are different endings.

2. Mr. Sharrett thinks I draw an unfair inference from the published writings of Coppola's wife that the director deluded himself into thinking he "reinvented" the dissolve. Actually, I think that in the hysteria of creation he deluded himself into thinking he *invented* it. Here is Mrs. Coppola on her husband, sitting at his editing machine, dissolving images: "It was amazing. Three layers of image. It was spatial. Francis says it changes the whole editing ball game. Pictures can be laid down layer upon layer. . . . I got a rush, standing there, contemplating the possibilities."

3. Having indicated in his opening paragraph that he is going to proceed with a "reasonable dissection of the film's aesthetics and philosophy," Mr. Sharrett concludes in his last paragraph that the story of the film—the "simplicity" of which "continues to elude serious scholarship"—is purely "how moral consciousness disintegrates in the face of war, especially the general confusion that was Vietnam." Debating Mr. Sharrett is decidely heavy going. I do not think the disintegration of moral consciousness is simple. And I don't see how even he can think that the "general confusion that was Vietnam" can be simple. But most of all, I don't think *Apocalypse Now* aspires to be only a story of war turning men into brutes. If this were the case, why would the director have his Colonel Kurtz quote T.S. Eliot (not a well-known war poet)? Why Frazer? Why Weston? Why, for that matter, Joseph Conrad, author of the original novel, who wrote very little about war, and certainly was not concerned with war in *Heart of Darkness*? I do not think Coppola was at all successful in attempting to charge his film with these extra levels of meaning, but we have his own word for it that he tried. The cadavers of his hopes, in fact, are in the film.

Leaving Mr. Sharrett aside, I would like to address myself to a new point, which seems to have been neglected by all critics of *Apocalypse Now*, and which I myself neglected, perhaps as concerning literature more than the cinema. Analyzing the politics of a writer of the intellectual complexity of Conrad is not without its perils, but I consider it stunningly obvious that a bedrock assumption of *Heart of Darkness* is that European (Western) civilization—gunboat diplomacy or no—had moral values of shining incandescence compared to the savagery obtaining in much of what we now call the Third World. Kurtz is not damned in *Heart of Darkness* because he is too zealous a representative of the West, but because he goes over to the enemy. Any reader with a knowledge of history (I assume this would exclude Coppola) must realize that Conrad, although closer in time to us than to the Spanish conquest of Mexico, has more in common with Cortez and his men, who gazed at the bloodthirsty ceremonies of the Aztecs with the utmost horror, considering them plainly the works of Satan, than he does with a modern anthropologist, who would probably feel it his duty to view such ceremonies with scrupulous neutrality. There are other levels of meaning in *Heart of Darkness*, too, of course, psychological, metaphysical, even religious, and the Third World has certainly changed vastly since its publication—but not so much as to make seemly the perversion of a great novel to vilify Western values when one of its clear original purposes was to uphold them, to cling to them, in fact, with desperation. In the modish lexicon of current Third World apologists, Joseph Conrad's views on the preeminence of Western civilization might make him a reactionary, but this is a question they will have to take up with Joseph Conrad. They cannot invoke him as an ally when he was not.

Afghanistan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Having lived in Kabul, Afghanistan, from 1974 to 1976, I must say that the arguments of Selig S. Harrison in the December 1979 Letters section [in a discussion of Francis Fukuyama's article, "A New Soviet Strategy," October 1979] are simply false. Mr. Harrison says: "The Kabul coup . . . [was] the tragic culmination of a cycle of challenge and response set in motion by the Shah with U.S. encouragement." But Russians were already *everywhere* in Kabul during these years—as "advisers," soldiers, etc. In fact, my first and lasting impression was: here goes another country—Afghanistan will never get rid of all those Russians.

VLADO RUŽIĆ
San Francisco, California

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Indochina & the American Conscience

Peter L. Berger

INDOCHINA has been a touchstone of moral anguish for large numbers of Americans who have never set foot in that part of the world. I am one of them. Indochina and its torments came to my attention primarily by means of modern communications media, especially television, as was the case with the overwhelming majority of other Americans. It was television images that aroused my moral outrage and led me to become a vocal opponent of the Vietnam war, and a few years later it was other television images that compelled me to face the question of whether that opposition may not have been a moral failure of terrifying proportions. These other images appeared on the screen in early 1975, at the beginning of the last North Vietnamese offensive that soon afterward resulted in the fall of Saigon. Danang was about to be taken, and tens of thousands of refugees were leaving by land and sea. On the CBS evening news Walter Cronkite observed that some particularly cruel pictures were about to be seen and that parents might want to send their children out of the room. Then the pictures came on. A ship full of refugees had arrived somewhere on the coast. Piles of corpses were on the beach, mostly of children who had died of hunger and thirst. A woman was carrying her dead child in her arms. The question was inescapable: is *this* what those of us who had opposed the war helped bring about? The question has lost none of its sharpness in the intervening years, as one horror after another has been inflicted on the peoples of Indochina by the "liberators" given a free hand by the American withdrawal.

I do not share the penchant for confessions of guilt that is so widespread among Western intellectuals. All the same, if I had to conclude today that I was morally wrong in opposing American policy in Indochina in the late 1960's, I would feel constrained to say so publicly. It seems to me that it is a matter of, as it were, political hygiene that one must not walk away in silence from positions stated at the top of one's voice in the past. Let it be stated at the outset that, after much thought, I have found myself unable to conclude that my opposition to this particular war was morally wrong. On the contrary, this opposition resulted from some fundamental moral impulses that I could only repudiate by denying my understanding of what it means to be human. To say this, however, is the beginning rather than the end of a process of moral and political reflection. My opposition to the war was very unoriginal in its motives and presuppositions. Precisely for this reason there may be some usefulness in reflecting about it publicly, all the more so since the so-called "lessons of Vietnam" continue to affect the future as they serve to reinterpret the past.

There is a set of facts that must serve as the empirical background of this process of reflection. There is the fact, first of all, that the anti-war movement was a primary causal factor in the American withdrawal from Indochina. Henry Kissinger's memoirs provide a full and persuasive account of how every action of the American government from 1968 on was influenced by the growing power of the anti-war movement over domestic public opinion, so that, as Kissinger puts it, the United States was negotiating with itself more than with its adversary in Indochina. This situation was exploited at each turn by Hanoi. It is probably idle to speculate on the course the war might have taken in the absence of the anti-war movement. But it is clear that the growing presence of the anti-war movement contributed crucially to the decision to withdraw American forces from Vietnam, to settle on the terms finally offered by Hanoi in late 1972, and to curtail military assistance to the friendly regimes in Indochina in the wake of the American withdrawal. Analysts will undoubtedly continue to differ on the contribution of other factors, including the internal weaknesses of those regimes. No honest analyst can, however, deny that the anti-war movement made an important contribution. It follows, I think, that anyone who participated in the anti-war movement in any public form must ask himself about his own responsibility for these events.

Responsibility is not the same as guilt. An individual is not guilty of actions performed by others and neither intended nor foreseen by himself; nor can these actions in retrospect invalidate his own motives. Yet, foreseen or not, one's own actions have consequences, and one cannot escape respon-

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sibility for these consequences by protesting the purity of one's erstwhile motives or by restating the obvious truth that no man can look into the future.

That is why this particular moral reflection must take into account the consequences of the American withdrawal from Indochina. By now, these consequences have assumed a lucid clarity. Contrary to what most members (including myself) of the anti-war movement expected, the peoples of Indochina have, since 1975, been subjected to suffering far worse than anything that was inflicted upon them by the United States and its allies. The terror imposed on South Vietnam by its conquerors has been vastly worse than anything perpetrated by the old Saigon regime, both in quantity and quality. There were no boat people trying to escape from Thieu. Of Vietnam it can at least be said with some assurance that fewer people have died by violence there since 1975 than during the years of active warfare; indeed, very few governments, however terroristic, kill as many people in times of peace as they do when they are waging war. The Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia has been an exception to this generalization, to the point where its genocidal record will occupy a unique place of horror in the annals of inhumanity. As far as the peoples of Indochina are concerned, the consequences of Hanoi's victory have been a human catastrophe of monumental dimensions.

To be sure, there are individuals in America who continue to deny these facts—as there are individuals who deny the facts of the Holocaust. Such individuals are outside the boundaries of rational discourse. There are also those who manage to convince themselves that the crimes of America's adversaries are the consequence of American actions and thus ultimately America's fault—a line of argument which, if not exactly outside the boundaries of rational discourse, is morally analogous to blaming Winston Churchill for the Holocaust on the ground that the Nazis would not have become so nasty if they had not been thwarted. I cannot judge how many Americans coming out of the anti-war movement employ these strategies to evade facing the question of their own responsibility. I am grateful that, evidently, there are many who reject such evasions.

But the consequences of the American withdrawal from Indochina are not limited to that unhappy region. The facts here are less lucid, less unambiguous, but I believe that an objective analysis of the world situation yields the conclusion that the international balance of power has been greatly altered by the defeat of the United States in Indochina. American power has dramatically declined, politically as well as militarily, and the major beneficiary of this decline has been the Soviet Union. Another of its consequences has been a higher degree of instability and unpredictability in the international system, particularly in regions no longer under American and not yet under Soviet influence. These developments are far from over. Still, a world situation in which totalitarianism has grown stronger and in which peace is more precarious hardly represents a turn for the better. At least indirectly, the anti-war movement contributed to that turn.

Finally, on the domestic scene, the anti-war movement was the centerpiece of the ideological and cultural constellation we now know as "the late 60's." This constellation has changed and its more lurid manifestations have disappeared, at least for the moment. But it also has had lasting effects. While not all of these, in my view, are regrettable, some are most regrettable indeed, and they happen to be the ones most directly linked to the anti-war movement. The late 60's have given new legitimacy to totalitarian ideologies of the "Left" variety, and these have become institutionalized in broad areas of the culture. Under the mantle of the present administration there has been a massive influx into the federal government of people who, while hardly "leftist" in any doctrinaire sense, are deeply convinced that American power is one of the most vexing problems in the contemporary world, and who are almost instinctively disposed to give the benefit of the doubt to the enemies rather than the friends of the United States. Even more broadly, the late 60's have left as their legacy a widespread malaise about the basic social, political, and cultural institutions of this country, a feeling that America is a "sick society," to be cured (if at all) by this or that radical transformation. These developments have not contributed to the social and political health of the country; indeed, they can be subsumed under the category of decadence.

THE facts about Indochina apart, I am well aware that honest observers will disagree with me on some of the preceding assessments. I state them here, without being able to argue them in detail, because I consider them to be consequences that must be included in my own reflection on the moral "lessons of Vietnam." Before I proceed with this, however, it is necessary to describe the character of my own opposition to the war. I do so without any notion that my case is in itself interesting or important. On the contrary, it is precisely because I was very typical of a broad "centrist" constituency within the anti-war camp that a delineation of my position is worth the effort.

This position was "simplistic" in that it was based on outrage over the cruelties of the war rather than on a political analysis of why the American course was wrong. (Needless to say, the charge of being "simplistic" was frequently made to me and others like me by ideologues within the movement; I always agreed with the description, without feeling faulted thereby.) Indeed, I was not even quite sure, except toward the end of the

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American involvement, that it had been a political mistake. The point, I thought, was arguable either way; what concerned me was not American mistakes but American crimes. Nor did I oppose the war out of any Marxist or *marxisant* view of the world. Such a view never had the slightest intellectual or emotional attraction for me, and I was somewhat atypical to the extent that my participation in the anti-war movement (which, in any case, was always cautious) did not in the least "radicalize" my political thinking—if anything, it made me define myself more sharply than before as standing "Right of Center."

Thus my opposition to the war had nothing to do with the general critique of American imperialism that became so fashionable in those years. On the contrary: I was never troubled by the fact of American intervention as such nor by the fact that American actions in Vietnam were those of an imperial power. As an Austrian by origin, I could never forget that it had been American military intervention which saved Europe from Hitler, and that American imperial power had continued to shield the continent of my birth against Stalin and his heirs. No powerful nation ever avoids getting its hands dirty, but, in comparison with others, the United States had in my view exercised its imperial power with impressive moral restraint. Further, I had no illusions about the Hanoi regime and its allied revolutionary movements. The human record of the regime in North Vietnam was odious and its conduct of the war in the South was atrocious. I did not admire the Communists in Indochina and I had no expectation that their victory would improve the lot of anyone except their own cadres (and least of all the lot of the poor). Finally, I was not greatly troubled by the fact that the Saigon regime was corrupt and undemocratic. I knew that most Third World governments are both corrupt and undemocratic, and I realized that the chances for changing this in the midst of a savage war were slim. What troubled me about the Saigon regime was the same thing that troubled me about American conduct in the war—the exceptional cruelty of the methods of warfare and of the repressive apparatus. The atrocities stemming from these methods, I thought, were not isolated or accidental but systematic and intrinsic to the war. Free-fire zones, napalm bombing of villages, the "generation of refugees," defoliation and kindred destructions of the countryside, the torture of prisoners, the assassination of political suspects—all these were endemic to this war, and I found it morally intolerable that my country should be engaged in them.

IN a paper I wrote in 1969, after making most of the points just enumerated, I went on:

> I have never been in or even near Vietnam. But I vividly remember a bright summer day a few years ago. I was reading a newspaper in an outdoor café in Switzerland, immersed in the sense of orderly well-being which that country is so peculiarly adept in producing and quite at peace with myself. Then my eye fell on a picture in the newspaper. It showed a group of South Vietnamese soldiers torturing a Vietcong prisoner by holding his head under water. I instinctively started to turn the page to get rid of the picture, then stopped myself as I noticed a figure in what looked like an American officer's uniform standing on the edge of the group. It suddenly became important to determine whether it was, in fact, an American. I remember holding the paper close to my eyes, so that I could make out the insignia on the uniform or the racial features of the face. The picture was too blurred. Then I realized that it didn't really matter. I knew that these things were being done and that Americans stood by, both physically (as, possibly, in this instance) and in the sense of complicity. I did not for a moment feel guilty—I was not doing this, I had not been asked, I had not given my assent. But to the extent that all of this was being done in my name, I was responsible for dissociating myself from it. And to the extent that I had any possibilities, however limited, of influencing the course of events, I had an obligation to make use of them. This reaction had nothing to do with ideology or even with politics as such. It was an immediate and irresistible conviction that *this horror must stop.*

This was not an account of a conversion experience; it was one of many such incidents. And I tried all along to relate my moral reactions to my political understanding of the situation. But it was this outrage that originated and sustained my opposition to the war. I believe that very similar sentiments motivated a large number of other Americans during the years of American military involvement.

I am not prepared to repudiate this moral response now. I am not ashamed of it, and neither should anyone else be who felt the same way. For this reason, and despite the disastrous consequences to which my own and many others' morally motivated actions contributed, I cannot now indulge in confessions of guilt. *Neither* the United States government *nor* the anti-war movement is guilty of the Cambodian genocide and the other horrors that have followed the American withdrawal from Indochina; the moral onus for these horrors belongs to those who have perpetrated them, and nowhere else. Yet a simple reaffirmation of my own moral motivations, or those of at any rate the centrist segment of the anti-war movement, is not enough. This would be making things too easy for oneself. Rather, I believe, one must go on to reflect on two matters that are distinct from but related to the moral validity of the anti-war position. First, one must ask what we know now that we did not know then; second, one must ask what moral lessons are to be learned for the future. It seems to me that only in confronting these ques-

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tions can I, or anyone who took my position during the war, claim to be morally responsible.

As I have already indicated, my opposition to the war stemmed from outrage over the methods by which it was conducted by the United States and its South Vietnamese allies. My information on these methods (as, indeed, on most other aspects of the events in Indochina) came almost entirely from the major American news media, supplemented by some European reports and by the propagandistic output of the anti-war movement itself (of which, however, I tended to be wary from the beginning, preferring what I believed to be unbiased sources). This information, I thought, demonstrated that the war was being fought in such a way as to inflict systematic cruelties on the civilian population to such an extent that the term "war crimes" became appropriate. My view on this did not change throughout the period of American military involvement.

It would be a relief if I could now say unambiguously, on the basis of more recent information, that this conclusion was correct—and, indeed, it would be a relief if the opposite statement could be made without ambiguity. But I cannot honestly say either the one or the other. The most careful reassessment of these charges which has thus far been made is by Guenter Lewy in his book, *America in Vietnam*. Lewy's conclusions are not extreme, but he clearly finds that the reports of American and South Vietnamese atrocities were greatly exaggerated, that there was very little that would justify the term "war crimes" under international law, and that in all likelihood the American military effort in Vietnam was no more cruel than military methods used in earlier wars of the United States. I do not find Lewy's conclusion compelling, mainly because it is based overwhelmingly on American military sources; though he subjected these sources to a judicious critique, it seems to me that they contain a built-in bias. On some points (for example, on the use of napalm) I do find Lewy's argument persuasive, but not enough to justify my saying now that I was completely misinformed at the time.

On the other hand, if Lewy's sources are biased, one thing I know now that I did not know then is that the sources in the major news media on which I relied were biased as well. It is now clear that, roughly from 1967 on, there was a strong anti-war feeling behind major American reporting from Indochina. This has been carefully documented in the case of the Tet offensive of 1968 (a severe defeat for the Communists that was reported and interpreted as a defeat for the United States), and it is safe to assume that the same bias operated in the reporting of alleged American and South Vietnamese atrocities. Not that a deliberate effort to mislead was necessarily going on; there was the systematically distortive fact that American reporters could roam around with relative ease in the American-held areas while they were obviously barred from the areas held by the Communists. As a result, American and South Vietnamese cruelties loomed large in the reporting, while the intrinsically cruel methods and atrocities of the other side went largely unreported. Some of this was evident to me during the war (I never, for example, gave credence to the term "genocide" applied to American actions); it is more evident now. Nevertheless, I continue to believe that the war was marked by a distinctive brutality which cannot be subsumed under some general statement that "all war is hell." The war in Indochina had a very special "hellishness" flowing in large measure from its character as a war of counterinsurgency. This fact poses both moral and political questions of great difficulty, but they do not change my presuppositions about this particular war.

Throughout the period of American military engagement in Indochina, I believed that American policy was unclear and shifting, especially as regards the purpose of the war. Was it a war to stop the expansion of Chinese Communist power, or to test the possibility of counterinsurgency measures in general? In other words, was American intervention dictated by geopolitical considerations specific to Southeast Asia, or did Indochina become an arbitrary testing ground for counterinsurgency doctrine? Was it American policy to preserve any non-Communist government in South Vietnam or the particular government in Saigon at the time? Just what did "victory" or "defeat" mean in this war? In sum, what were the American war aims?

These may seem to be political rather than moral questions, but they have an important moral dimension that is best brought out by reference to classical "just war" theory. One of the important criteria of a "just war" is that there be a reasonable chance of success; otherwise, the sacrifices imposed by the war are wanton. Since it was very unclear what an American "success" in Indochina would look like, it was difficult to argue in justification of the war.

This problem was aggravated by the vacillations and deceptions of American government pronouncements on the war, and it was at the core of the sentiment of absurdity felt by increasing numbers of Americans. In the case of my own opposition, it was an important element until the beginning of the withdrawal policy. At least from 1968 on (both in the last period of the Johnson administration and after Nixon's inauguration) it seemed evident to me that the policy was to disengage in such a way as to leave a viable non-Communist government in the South. I agreed with this policy, and for that reason (along with my mounting disillusion with the anti-war movement) my opposition became more muted.

In this connection, it is important to stress cer-

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tain facts that, evident then, have become even more amply evident by now. It is not true that the United States settled in 1973 on terms that could have been obtained in 1969. Only in the fall of 1972 did the North Vietnamese drop their demand that, prior to American withdrawal and a freeing of American prisoners of war, the United States overthrow the Thieu government and replace it with a "coalition" regime that would guarantee Communist dominance. I believed then that this was an unacceptable demand, and I believe the same now. Whether the 1973 settlement did indeed give the South Vietnamese a fair chance to survive in a non-Communist society is a question that will never be answered. That fair chance, if it ever existed, assumed a continuing American commitment to maintain the terms of the settlement—an assumption that was shattered by the destruction of the Nixon administration and the refusal of Congress to maintain an adequate level of military aid to the Saigon government (not to mention the Cambodian government).

Nor is it true that the defeat of South Vietnam demonstrates the impossibility of withstanding an insurgency that has won the "hearts and minds" of a people. As to the "hearts and minds" of the people of South Vietnam, the direction of the refugee streams tells its own story. As to the invincibility of insurgencies, South Vietnam was not taken over by the tattered remnants of the Vietcong, but by conventional North Vietnamese forces, with armor and artillery pouring across the (ironically named) Demilitarized Zone.

There was another perception related to American war aims that should be mentioned because it was important for me and many others in the anti-war camp—the perception that American policy in Indochina was an exercise in hubris (Senator Fulbright's by now proverbial "arrogance of power"). In the wake of the demoralization of recent years, this perception is actually difficult to reconstruct, but I think it was quite accurate in the early and middle 1960's. This was indeed a period during which "the best and the brightest" of America's intellectual and political elites looked upon the world as the marble chessboard of their geopolitical games. Vietnam just happened to be one of these games and when it slipped from their control, most of these people swiftly dissociated themselves from the enterprise. Some even became vociferously self-righteous critics of the policies they had been instrumental in inaugurating. It was an undignified spectacle, and it was fully matched by the hubris that rapidly developed within the anti-war movement itself. Perhaps it is a matter of taste whether one is more offended by the arrogance of technocrats or ideologues. The fact remains that the beginnings of American involvement in Indochina were rooted in the hubris of academic and political experiments with the lives and futures of people barely understood by the American policy-makers.

My view of the South Vietnamese regime was also quite typical of people in the anti-war camp (and, indeed, of general public opinion in this country). I perceived that regime as undemocratic, corrupt, brutal, and lacking in popular support. As already mentioned, I was not quite so typical in being more troubled by its brutality than by its other unattractive features —I believed that democracy and "clean government" as understood in, say, Minnesota, were unlikely possibilities in Southeast Asia, and it was not at all clear to me even then that the Communists had more popular support than the Saigon authorities; I assumed that relative fear rather than relative popularity was the decisive issue in a guerrilla war. I recall an incident in the national committee of Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam (CALCAV), with which I was then associated (I dissociated myself when that organization turned from a straightforward anti-war group into a sort of Maoist chaplaincy to the religious community). We heard a report from Michael Novak, who had just returned from a trip to Vietnam. He told us that the Vietcong were both feared and hated in the countryside. Except for me, hardly anyone at the meeting was willing to give credence to this. The "hearts and minds" argument was spurious at all stages of the war, and I, for one, knew it.

But as to the undemocratic, corrupt, and brutal character of the Saigon regime, nothing that I have learned since has forced me to change my view. Possibly, as Lewy argues, the brutalities of that regime were also exaggerated in the American media; his detailed treatment of the so-called "tiger cages" is instructive in that respect. But I cannot see that any of the more recent information compels a radical revision of the perception that the regime systematically employed inhuman methods in dealing with all forms of real and imagined opposition. I cannot judge whether other policies might have given a better chance to "Third Force" elements (that is, the non-Communist opposition). Be that as it may, two facts are clear. The first is that the Communist forces were even more brutal than the South Vietnamese during the war, and the governments they established after the war, both in South Vietnam and in Cambodia, were vastly more inhuman than the ones they replaced. And the second is that the Communist victory in South Vietnam was achieved by conventional military superiority, not through some irresistible upsurge of popular discontent. In fairness, it must be added that the sudden and unexpected collapse of the South Vietnamese army at the end of the war can arguably be linked to the corruption of the regime it served. Even at that point, however, the stream of refugees never moved toward the Communist-held areas, but always away from them, despite the fact that in moving in this direction the refugees were moving with the war. It was not the war but the

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"liberation" that vast numbers of people (the majority of them simple peasants) were desperately seeking to escape from. And, of course, they knew why.

The anti-war movement was split at all times between those who admired the Hanoi regime and the Vietcong as harbingers of social justice and humanity, and those who had a more realistic view of the matter. I cannot estimate the relative size of these two groups, but I always belonged to the latter one. North Vietnam was in my eyes a standard totalitarian regime, led by fanatical ideologues who had murdered tens of thousands of people in the early 1950's and who controlled their society by standard Stalinist methods. This view was correct then; needless to say, it is correct today. The glowing accounts of how the Communists had eradicated misery and starvation—accounts brought back to the American anti-war movement by assorted envoys to Hanoi, ranging from devoted Marxists to starry-eyed Christians—were, of course, of the same accuracy as similar reports by pilgrims to the Soviet Union and China (not to mention Cuba, Albania, and Mozambique). I had no part in any of this, and I will not delve further here into this fascinating area of political psychopathology. It is relevant to a reassessment of the anti-war movement only to the extent that the same people, with the same endless credulity, are still with us today, so that their misperceptions then are predictive of comparable misperceptions now or in the future.

Of GREATER significance for the reassessment at issue here is what I, along with many others, believed about the probable consequences of an American withdrawal from Indochina. Though it embarrasses me, I will quote a paragraph from an article I wrote in spring 1967:

> It seems to me, then, that there is a simple conclusion to the moral argument, quite apart from the complexity of the political issues: *There is no excuse for methods of warfare that are in themselves a crime. And if a war cannot be fought except with these methods, then this war must be stopped—regardless of political costs.* To arrive at this conclusion need not involve any simplistic illusions about the political complexities. It also need not involve any optimistic expectations. All sorts of dire results might well follow a reduction or a withdrawal of the American engagement in Vietnam. Morally speaking, however, it is safe to assume that none of these could be worse than what is taking place right now.

Well, it was *not* safe to assume—neither morally speaking nor politically speaking. I was wrong, and so were all those who thought as I did. Two ideas were involved here, both negative, both denials of positions held by those who supported the war—the "bloodbath theory" and the "domino theory." Supporters of the war predicted that a Communist victory would lead to a bloodbath and that it was the responsibility of the United States to prevent it, quite apart from other war aims. So far as Cambodia is concerned, the bloodbath that in fact has taken place there (and is still taking place) goes beyond even the most nightmarish fantasies of the staunchest "hawks." Nothing that has happened in Vietnam, to be sure, comes close to the Cambodian horror—to the point where, for once, I am prepared to believe Hanoi's propaganda that the Cambodians welcomed the Vietnamese invasion, as the desperate peasants of Stalin's Russia initially welcomed the invading German troops, before the Nazis revealed their full bestiality, and as the survivors of the Nazi concentration camps in Eastern Europe greeted Stalin's armies as liberators. Such are the cruel ironies of history. But to acknowledge that there are atrocities beyond atrocities is not much to say in vindication of the government imposed by Hanoi on the South.

I remember some of the early American reporting from Saigon, after its fall to the North Vietnamese forces. Many of these reports recalled the predictions of the bloodbath theory and pointed out that nothing like that was taking place. These reports were, I think, both honest and accurate: no bloodbath was taking place—*then*. By analogy, no correspondent reporting from Poland in 1939, say a few weeks after the German occupation, would have seen signs of the "Final Solution." The screws of totalitarian control usually turn slowly and even genocidal designs take time to be realized (in this too the Khmer Rouge are an exception). What the Communists did in South Vietnam is by now very clear: slowly, systematically, a merciless system of totalitarian control was extended through every segment of the society. With this, inevitably, went the setting up of a Vietnamese version of the Gulag Archipelago, with the familiar machinery of terror. I do not have the figures of how many human beings have perished under this terror, either directly by execution and torture, or indirectly by hunger and exhaustion in the "reeducation camps" and the "new economic zones." Consequently, one may still argue for Vietnam (which one cannot over Cambodia) whether the term "bloodbath" is precise or adequate. The genocidal assault on the Chinese minority in Vietnam, leading to the unspeakable horrors of the boat people, is perhaps also not correctly describable as a "bloodbath," though the moral difference between killing people directly or driving them into the sea to die is not clear to me.

The "bloodbath theory," then, has been broadly validated. How about the "domino theory"? It has certainly been validated for the whole of Indochina. Cambodia and Laos fell to the Communists in the wake of the fall of South Vietnam, as predicted; and, contrary to some fashionable opinions, this outcome is not the result of America's "extending the war" (it was Hanoi that extended

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the war to those two unhappy countries, prior to any American actions there) but was part of Hanoi's drive for hegemony in Indochina all along. In the rest of Southeast Asia the theory has not been validated. The ASEAN countries (Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore) continue to survive as non-Communist states, and though they are all afraid of Hanoi, they are not ruled by it. However, as stated above, I believe that the massive shift in the world balance of power since 1975 must be ascribed, in large measure, to the American defeat in Indochina. If so, then Southeast Asia is not the only testing ground of the theory. Thailand may not be a "domino," at least not yet; but Angola may be, and Afghanistan, and Iran, and perhaps even Nicaragua. Future validation or falsification of the domino theory will depend upon the degree to which American world power disintegrates further.

FINALLY, a relevant issue was my own perception of the character and prospects of the anti-war movement, a perception that once again was very widespread, indeed predominant, among "centrist" opponents of the war. At least initially, I perceived the anti-war movement as a deeply moving and admirable upsurge of human decency, and this perception allowed me to have amicable sentiments toward Marxists and other ideologues within the movement because of what I thought to be a shared moral outrage at the inhumanities of the war. I further thought that, because of this shared morality, the anti-war movement embodied a high promise for the future of America. This hope was then caught in the phrase, "the constituency of conscience."

For me, at any rate, this view of the anti-war movement changed drastically during the course of its existence. At first, until 1968, I considered myself a "Right-of-Center" member of the movement; after 1968, I opposed the war *despite* the anti-war movement, which I had come to see as profoundly destructive in some of its central impulses. In a number of places, including CALCAV and a variety of university groups that I could observe at close range, I saw the movement taken over for their own purposes by people who were not interested in stopping the war but in defeating and humiliating America. Put simply, while at first I thought that anti-Americanism was a regrettable fringe phenomenon in the movement, after the spring madness of 1968 I concluded that anti-Americanism was at its core. I vividly recall a meeting of the CALCAV national committee about that time. The question was raised by someone whether the unfurling of Vietcong flags at demonstrations might not be counterproductive (no one, as far as I remember, questioned whether it was moral). In the discussion I suggested that anti-war demonstrations in this country should take place amid oceans of *American* flags. Most of the individuals there looked at me with blank incomprehension; whatever their tactical notions about the uses of Vietcong flags, it was taken for granted by them that the American flag was the symbol of oppression and inhumanity, and its use in an anti-war demonstration would be morally unthinkable whatever the tactical considerations.

In my own thinking, the anti-war movement now makes sense in a much broader sociological context, that of the rise of the "New Class." It was part of a much broader ideological constellation, including the counterculture and a miscellany of other movements, which heralded the advent of this class on the center stage of American culture. This fact is morally ambiguous (I have found some elements in the ideology of the New Class morally attractive, others repellent, and some merely a matter of taste), and this is not the place to develop the sociological implications. What I now know, though, is this: the anti-war movement was not simply an upsurge of humanitarian sensibility. Some of its uglier features, notably the hatred of America (not just of this or that American policy), were intrinsic rather than peripheral. And the hope for a new "constituency of conscience" was a naive illusion that embarrasses me in retrospect. Indeed, the fragmentation of this constituency in the face of the post-1975 realities of Indochina reveals more clearly than anything else the brittle character of what seemed then to be a moral consensus.

THE purpose of the present considerations is not some abstract examination of conscience devoid of political implications. While I believe that moral judgments are different from political ones (so that, in the 1960's, the judgment that American actions in Vietnam constituted a crime was very different from the judgment that these actions were a mistake), I also believe that morality applied to politics must have an actual or potential relation to practice. The debate over the political lessons of Vietnam, in terms of what were and what were not the mistakes of American policies in Indochina, will continue for years to come. What concerns me here are the *moral* lessons of Vietnam. For myself, these lessons are few but far-reaching. They are contained in the following four propositions.

1. There is a moral difference between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. In terms of political theory, this difference was enunciated in the work of Hannah Arendt. It is essentially a simple one: an authoritarian regime is one that suppresses all political opposition; a totalitarian regime is one that seeks to integrate every institution within a society in an all-pervasive political structure. To be sure, both types of regime are non-democratic, but to subsume them under that negative quality is to obfuscate the profound difference between them. Authoritarian regimes are nothing new in human history; on the contrary, they are part of

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what the Dutch historian Jan Romein has called the "common human pattern." Totalitarianism is an innovation of this century, made possible by the vast expansion in the power of the state as a result of modern technology. No one who has ever lived under a totalitarian regime is likely to overlook the difference at issue. In an authoritarian society the individual knows that he will get into trouble if he engages in oppositional political activity, but if he keeps his mouth shut on political matters there are broad areas of life in which he can live without constant government interference—in the family, in religious institutions, at work, even in a variety of non-political social and cultural associations. In a totalitarian society, keeping one's mouth shut about politics is not enough. The arm of government reaches into every sector of the individual's life, integrating and controlling him, and what is demanded of him is continuous participation in the program designed by the political structure for the whole of society. Thus the violations of human liberties by an authoritarian regime are always ancillary to the purpose of stifling political opposition, *ipso facto* sporadic and less than all-embracing. The totalitarian regime, by contrast, is by its very nature an ongoing assault on every human impulse of freedom. This does not mean that totalitarianism is a night in which all cats are gray. There are differences among totalitarian regimes in the degree and quality of repressive terror: Hungary is not Albania; the Soviet Union today is not what it was at the time of Stalin's purges; and so on. But the fundamental difference between the two socio-political types still obtains.

I suppose that the persistent incapacity of even American professors to grasp a difference understood by every taxi driver in Prague is due not only to their sheltered condition but to the old American proclivity, expressed powerfully (and with disastrous historical consequences) by "Wilsonianism," to view the world through narrow ethnocentric spectacles: everything that is not American-style democracy is an undifferentiated evil. But for many American professors, whose enthusiasm for the American political system is restrained, this failure of perception has another important ideological function: it hides the fact that totalitarianism today is limited to socialist societies, while the non-socialist world, a mix of authoritarian, democratic, and semi-democratic governments, does not contain a single totalitarian regime. This fact flies in the face of the socialist dream that haunts the intellectual imagination of the West, and there is a strong ideological interest in suppressing it. Thus South Korea is mentioned in the same breath as North Korea, both the People's Republic of China and Taiwan are characterized as non-democratic regimes, and so on. The perception of North Vietnam and South Vietnam during the war was flawed decisively by the same failure of vision. The transformation of Saigon into Ho Chi Minh City now offers a crystal-clear illustration of the difference between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, both in terms of political science and political morality.

The same confusion mars current American policy on human rights. This policy, as has been pointed out by various critics, not only favors the adversaries over the friends of the United States by the way it has been applied. More fundamentally, its mechanical criteria fail to discriminate between the sporadic violations of human rights by authoritarian governments and the intrinsic, systemic assault on human rights of a totalitarian society. It seems to me that learning the difference should be one of the foremost lessons of Vietnam.

Morally speaking, authoritarian regimes should be given a benefit of doubt that must be denied to totalitarianism. This does not mean that the crimes of authoritarian regimes should not be protested by Americans, or that the moral quality of a regime should not be a consideration in United States foreign policy. It has been demonstrated a number of times that American pressure, prudently exerted, can serve to humanize regimes within the American sphere of influence, and I for one would deplore the abandonment of this possibility by a new *Realpolitik*. This is not the place to go into the difficult problem of how hard national interests can be modified by moral considerations in the foreign policy of this country (the most important question here, I think, is how the moral concern is to be institutionalized, and I believe that doing it within the existing structures of the federal government was an error). But as morally concerned American citizens engage in actions with foreign-policy implications, they should be aware of the constant danger that their actions may destabilize bad regimes in favor of vastly worse ones. Minimally, this means that actions should be designed to favor humanizing modifications of authoritarian regimes rather than supplanting these regimes by totalitarian ones. If a sober political assessment of a particular situation leads to the conclusion that this is not possible, the morally indicated course may well be to remain silent.

2. American citizens should not enter into political alliances with those who support totalitarianism. There are practical political reasons for this injunction, already taught by the Popular Front experiences of an earlier period. But in the present context the proposition is intended as a moral one: these alliances fatally flaw the very moral purpose for which they are undertaken in the first place. I want to emphasize that the proposition pertains to American citizens engaged in actions such as those of the anti-war movement rather than to the foreign policy of the American government. In the real world, friendly dealings, even alliances, with totalitarian regimes may be unavoidable. Thus the developing relationship with the

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People's Republic of China has been, I believe, a wise purpose of American foreign policy, and would have been that even if the Chinese regime had remained unaltered after Mao's death (leaving aside here the question of whether the return to greater sanity since then on the part of the Peking regime may or may not have been causally affected by the new American relationship). Thus too the wartime alliance between the Western powers and Stalin's Russia was not only strategically but morally justified by the purpose of defeating Hitler's Germany. But such moves of national policy are a very different matter, politically as well as morally, from alliances with Maoists and Stalinists within domestic movements of protest or advocacy.

Let me emphasize as strongly as I can that this proposition is by no means a rephrasing of the old Popular Front slogan into *"pas d'amis à gauche."* Fortunately, the line between totalitarians and anti-totalitarians does not follow the "Left" / "Right" divide; if it did, the world would be an even more nightmarish place than it is already. There is today, as there has been in the past, a vigorous democratic Left. It includes not only social democrats but sundry varieties of "humanist Marxists," some even members of Communist parties, and while someone like myself will always disagree with these people on their notions of socialism and on the socioeconomic requirements of freedom, they are indispensable allies in most efforts to humanize the international scene. My proposition does not refer to them. It refers to a different group, which has become all too visible in America (its presence in Europe has been of longer duration and is today more prominent) precisely since the late 1960's and at least in part because of its association with the anti-war movement. These are the people for whom the appellation "socialist" suffices to legitimate every revolutionary cause and every regime, no matter how brutal. These are the ones who either deny or justify the human horrors imposed by the "socialists" with whom they identify; I am not sure whether the denial or the justification is more repugnant. They cannot be argued with, they will not learn, and most of them will never change. They constitute the vanguard of the Gulag Archipelago. And anyone who cares about humanity should avoid even the slightest association with them.

They were all too prominent in the anti-war movement. To this day they will defend the Hanoi regime regardless of its atrocities and it is not morality but the gyrations of Indochinese politics that have now forced them to choose between the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge versions of "socialist revolution" (most of them, predictably, have chosen the former). The moral credibility of the anti-war movement was irreparably harmed by their prominent role in it.

The practical implications of this insight are simple and immediate: no alliances with those who protest violations of human rights in Chile while remaining silent on Cuba, or with those for whom South Africa is the worst evil in the world while the likes of Idi Amin or the "Emperor" Bokassa are (at most) regrettable side effects of the "liberation process," or with those who criticize South Korea as if Kim Il Sung did not exist, and certainly not with those whose "anti-Zionism" is a thin cover for an international anti-Semitism not seen since the destruction of Nazism. After Franco's death a sound political maxim circulated in Spain (it was meant to apply to Stalinists as well as to Falangists): if you want to build a democracy, work with democrats. *Mutatis mutandis,* the maxim applies to the sort of moral outrage that animated centrists in the anti-war movement: if you are concerned with human rights, work with those who care about humanity.

3. On balance, American power is a force for good in the world. This is not a proposition of mindless nationalism, or an expression of faith in the "manifest destiny" of the American republic, or a statement implying that every exercise of American power should be uncritically applauded. Rather, it is a very sober proposition, based on the empirical realities of the contemporary world. My Central European origins maintained these realities in my consciousness even at the height of my own anti-war involvement; every time I visited my hometown of Vienna during those years I was conscious of the fact that the nearest Russian troops were some thirty miles away and that there was nothing to keep them from advancing except the long shadow of American power. The events that have followed the collapse of American power in Indochina should have educated people without the doubtful benefits of a Central European background in the moral status of the so-called American "empire"—or what is left of it.

To be sure, the "free world" that survives behind the now-battered shield of American power contains much that is morally deplorable, as indeed does the domestic society of the United States. Nothing is further from my mind than the suggestion that all criticism of these political and social evils should be muted because of the international role of this country. But it is a far cry from criticizing the shortcomings of a reality of which one basically approves to working, deliberately or unintentionally, toward the destruction of that reality. American power protects far more that is good than evil, and not only in Central Europe, and the empirically plausible alternatives to the American-maintained world system are almost invariably worse. It is perhaps not too much to hope that the unfolding drama of Iran will bring this lesson home to many Americans. The tragic drama of Indochina since 1975 should have taught the same lesson.

As in the case of American citizens protesting the inhumanities of authoritarian regimes friendly

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to the United States, Americans opposing this or that policy of their own government should be much more careful in the future to express their opposition in such a way as not to provide aid to the purposes of those who would destroy American power. Here too Henry Kissinger's memoirs provide a deeply disturbing insight into the role of the domestic opposition in frustrating the efforts of the American government to terminate the war on terms short of abject surrender. I realize very well that this is not an easy position and I have no readily applicable rule for drawing the line between responsible and irresponsible opposition. But perhaps an analogy might be helpful. I think that a strong moral argument could have been made against the strategic bombing of civilian populations in Germany and Japan during World War II. In the event, there was no "constituency of conscience" in America that protested this military strategy, and Dresden and Hiroshima have only in retrospect come to be perceived as symbols of moral shame. Yet it is possible to imagine a protest at that time which, while condemning these particular actions, would not have called for a termination of the American war effort against the Axis. It does not require an impossible exercise of the imagination to see, in retrospect, how the anti-war movement could have protested particular actions of the United States and its allies in Vietnam (such as the avoidable cruelties of various counterinsurgency measures) without giving vital assistance to Hanoi in its drive toward total victory.

Closely related to the perception of the moral status of American power is the perception of the moral quality of American society itself. The more strident denunciations of "Amerika" have happily diminished in recent years, but there continues to be a widespread idea, especially in the college-educated upper-middle class, that this is a profoundly "sick" or destructive society, and this idea undermines national self-confidence and will. It is an idea that is both empirically and morally grotesque. It is very difficult in the contemporary world to find a more humanly decent society than that of the United States, and the plausible cases are almost without exception societies that are politically and sociologically close to America. Whatever may be one's criticism of one or another aspect of social change in this country, what other country can one name where the last two decades have shown comparable strides toward a more decent society? Suffice it to name the monumental political, legal, and social efforts to protect civil liberties, to right the injustices of racial discrimination, to push back poverty, to improve the status of women, and to achieve a better life for the handicapped. Have all these efforts been completely successful? Of course not. Have there been unfortunate side-effects of some of these efforts? Of course there have. But to see the society in which these veritable explosions of human decency have taken place as peculiarly "sick" is more than a failure of perception. It is a symptom of moral dementia.

No less is at issue here than a reaffirmation of American patriotism, which has been severely shaken since the mid-1960's. Again, such a reaffirmation of patriotism is both politically and morally urgent. American society, despite its faults, is one of which its citizens have much reason to be proud. The same goes for the extension of this society's power onto the world scene. If the experiences of the American involvement in Indochina have sobered patriotism and given it a critical edge, so much the better. A regaining of America's patriotic instincts would be all the healthier for that.

4. The political world rarely if ever affords the luxury of morally pure actions. For many historical reasons, all well known, this is a particularly hard lesson for Americans to learn. That is why the political attitudes of Americans recurringly alternate between those of the amoral technocrat and the self-righteous ideologue; both attitudes are evasions of the moral ambiguities of acting in the real world of power. In my own thinking about political and social ethics I have never been able to get very far away from the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms, with its realization that politics will always remain in the kingdom of "God's left hand," which is not and cannot be the kingdom of grace. But one does not have to be a Lutheran to understand that acting politically means getting one's hands dirty. Nor is it all that difficult to see that, again and again, the refusal to exercise political power because of this fact has led to the victory of those who have no such scruples. Max Weber's distinction between an "ethic of pure motives" and an "ethic of responsibility" continues to be relevant to anyone seeking to be both politically effective and morally sensitive. The distinction was widely lost within the anti-war movement, and this led to predictably irresponsible actions. Those years witnessed a wild eruption in America of what another German sociologist, Arnold Gehlen, has aptly called "hypermorality." It is an attitude with almost invariably catastrophic consequences.

Anyone who would act with moral purity in the political arena is constrained to imagine utopian choices in the place of the real options available to him. It will now always remain a moot question whether the "Third Force" groupings, on which the centrists in the anti-war movement pinned such high hopes, ever had a real chance in Vietnam. Perhaps they did. Or perhaps those who refused to settle for Thieu had to get Ho Chi Minh. At the very least, however, the experience of Vietnam should teach greater care in the condemnation of this or that political option on the grounds of moral purity. Those who condemned the Shah brought about Khomeini. Those who condemn

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Pinochet may get Castro. To say this in no way implies a moral vindication of either the Shah or Pinochet. It does imply a recognition that politics almost always imposes a morality of choosing the lesser evil. In identifying the lesser evil, most of the time, it is necessary to keep the difference between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in mind as well as the moral status of American power.

It would be gratifying if this essay could end on an uplifting note: if only we learn these lessons, all will go well with us and America will regain the elan of an earlier period, and American power will once again be exercised in the world with good effect. I regret that I find myself unable to end on such a note. It is quite possible that it is too late for the lessons of Vietnam to be either learned or effectively applied. The rupture in American self-confidence, the sheer decadence of the important American elites, and the by now institutionalized paralysis of the American capacity to act with power on the international scene may simply have gone too far to be reversed. Moreover, the shift in the world balance of power resulting from the American defeat in Indochina may be irreversible even if there should occur a regeneration of American spirit and will. It is difficult to derive much hope from a sober assessment of current international developments. What lies ahead may be a long, long age of darkness. American society may itself be swallowed up in that darkness, and the Western experiment with freedom may turn out to have been a very brief episode in human history.

But we do not know this for certain. Not yet, anyway. The "ethic of responsibility" bids us act while we can; it prohibits abdication until that should become the only alternative. Even then, I would add, it is better to see clearly than to be caught in illusion. That is why the American crisis of conscience over Indochina calls for clarification, even if the practical fruits of such clarification may by now be meager.

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In Defense of Intelligence Tests

R. J. Herrnstein

CRITICS of intelligence testing have recently called for nothing less than its abolition in schools and elsewhere. More and more often, their calls are being answered in kind by courts, legislatures, and spokesmen in the media. The outcry against intelligence testing arises because many well-intentioned people believe that the tests victimize the culturally disadvantaged portion of the population, the portion least able to tolerate further disadvantage. However, as good as the intentions are, it is likely that intelligence tests are a net benefit to the disadvantaged and that their abolition would be precisely the wrong change for them. To see why, we must look closely at the facts about testing.

If we are to examine intelligence testing here, we should first consider the idea of testing more broadly, to see how ordinary an idea it is. To test is to sample and to predict. We test a frail-looking chair or a newly frozen pond before committing ourselves fully. With an exploratory poke, we hope to measure the strength of the chair or the ice well enough to predict later performance. Doctors sample heart beats, body temperature, blood composition, and so on. From these small soundings, they are supposed to predict what would be found more deeply inside us and our health until the next check-up. We allow a doctor to take an ounce of blood rather than insisting on a gallon, gladly trusting in the predictive power of a small sample.

All it takes to create a test is a measurement known to correlate with whatever it is we would like to predict. An intelligence test is, to begin with, merely a measurable sampling of a person's behavior lasting anywhere from about 20 to 120 minutes. From this sampling, we should be able to predict other behavior of the sort that is thought of as intellectual. As tests in general go, intelligence tests are unremarkable in principle.

Unremarkable as they are, they have been engulfed for a decade in an unequaled controversy within the academic world and beyond it. A number of state and municipal authorities have now banned routine intelligence tests in public schools, and it is not unlikely that others will do the same. Hundreds of court decisions and executive orders at every level have prohibited or restricted the use of intelligence tests for screening job candidates or for selecting and tracking students. The public manifestations of controversy mean far more than the personal ones, but the personal ones show its intensity. A few academics who are publicly identified as advocates of intelligence testing have been physically assaulted on lecture platforms, have had their property damaged, their and their family's lives threatened, and have been accused of the grossest defects of character.

As a result, many experts on intelligence testing resist becoming publicly identified, especially if they agree with the unpopular views. Since those who hold the popular views are not similarly deterred, the public debate is predictably biased. It takes special pains to get a balanced and reasonably complete account of intelligence testing into the public forum where it might inform public policy.

Intense as it has been, the controversy may now intensify again because of the publication of Arthur R. Jensen's new book, *Bias in Mental Testing*.* Jensen, a professor of educational psychology at the University of California at Berkeley, has been the major figure in the intelligence controversy of the 1970's. He was thrust into the role after his article, "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?," was published in the *Harvard Educational Review* in 1969. Jensen's answer to the question in the title was that since intelligence contributed to the variation in the performance of schoolchildren and since intelligence has genetic determiners, individual differences in scholastic achievement were bound to be relatively hard, though not necessarily impossible, to improve by simple remedies. The article bristled with over 100 pages of analysis of data and so must be oversimplified in a one-sentence summary, but its impact was as startling as a clap of thunder, for a variety of reasons.

The prime reason was that the article raised the possibility of racial differences in mental capacity. More than 90 per cent of it, however, dealt not

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with race but with individual differences in school performance and test scores. Jensen's review was nearly exhaustive, more nearly so than other summaries then available on the subject. Findings on the heritability of intelligence, for example, that had little impact individually were impressive when they began piling up. The strength of the evidence as a whole had not often been noted, particularly by the audience of educators to whom the article was addressed. Several streams of research converged to support the possibility that compensatory-education programs were disappointing because they were bucking the heritability of intelligence. In practical terms, significant heritability translates into significant individual differences in learning from a given educational curriculum.

By suggesting that genetic factors were affecting educational outcomes, Jensen's paper brought two usually separate bodies of evidence together, which was a source both of strength and of vulnerability. Its strength was its novelty. Its vulnerability was that few experts had broad enough training to testify to Jensen's overall accuracy. Unfriendly critics could point to occasional minor lapses and get away with insinuating much worse. Not many readers of the *Harvard Educational Review* or the wider audience of the spreading controversy knew the methods and findings of quantitative genetics, a new and still developing branch of biology that relies heavily on complex statistics to determine how much of the variation in a trait is hereditary and how much is not. Many of Jensen's critics did not realize that it was possible, using the new mathematical procedures, to estimate within limits the relative contributions of environment and genes to psychological measurements like IQ or scholastic achievement scores. Quantitative genetics applied to socially significant human characteristics still has many technical hurdles to surmount, which Jensen and others may have been underestimating, but the very enterprise shocked many people who did not easily think of human society in biological terms.

Not only was it a shock, it was unwelcome. Biology seemed more often than not to undermine political and moral ideals. Biology creates inequalities, not just the physical inequalities of size, strength, speed, and durability but also psychological variations in cognitive capacities, emotional tendencies, and motivational appetites. Biology sets limits, though perhaps broad ones, on how much or how little altruism, fidelity, aggression, fairness, compassion, piety, and lawfulness a society composed of the creatures we call human can reasonably count on. Political or moral theories that promise to erase inequalities of intellect or character or to enhance compassion and lawfulness while eliminating avarice and aggression are challenged by the hypothesis of biological determination. Not that those issues are settled, but their appearance on the intellectual horizon signaled the inevitable blending of the social sciences with biology. As threatening as Darwinian theory seemed when it challenged Scripture in the 19th century, the new challenge cut closer to the quick—to personal qualities, to the structure of family life, and to the institutions of society. Social Darwinism had, of course, been known before, but now both the social sciences and biology have matured to a point when their union bears fruit: actual data on practical social concerns. Jensen's analysis of compensatory education was the first significant example to be picked up by the public press, hence the most shocking.

The intelligence controversy is, then, part of a larger upheaval in social science, one that could be called the naturalization of social science. The upheaval will no doubt rumble on at least until there are enough social scientists—economists, sociologists, and political scientists no less than psychologists—with training in biology, and vice versa for biologists, so that it will no longer seem indecent to bring the two disciplines together. But the intelligence controversy is not just an argument about the relative contribution of the genes. Intelligence testing is embroiled in four separate quarrels, only one of which involves biology directly. Jensen's new book, in fact, deals with the other three, which are: first, do test scores really measure intelligence, and how can such a question be answered? Second, do test scores really predict anything important or are they just an arbitrary credential used by the haves to lock out the have nots? Third, what kinds of biases are programmed into the tests? In this article, I will survey all four questions, starting with the heritability of IQ scores.

Inheritance of Intelligence

THE human traits that everyone presumes to be genetic have, by and large, not been proved to be so. Not much formal evidence has been gathered about, say, how tall people grow, whether their noses curve up or down, whether they have long legs and short waists or vice versa. For such visible, intuitively measurable features, family correlations are self-evident. We can see traits running in families. When the Kennedys recently came to Boston for the dedication of the Presidential Library, we saw on the evening news informal evidence for the heritability of a broad jaw and wavy brown hair.

If people wore their IQ's like the numbers on a football jersey, we would see this trait too running in families. Parents correlate with their children, and also with their grandchildren but not as much. First cousins correlate more than second cousins, who correlate more than third cousins, and so on to the limit of what anyone has bothered to measure so far. Half-siblings, with just one parent in common, correlate less than full sib-

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lings; identical twins, who share all their genes, correlate more than fraternal twins, who share about 50 per cent, no more than ordinary brothers and sisters.

It could be, and indeed has been, argued that these correlations really show shared environments, not shared genes. On the average, parents share more of the environment with their children than grandparents share with their grandchildren. First cousins have more of a shared environment than second cousins, full siblings more than half-siblings, and so on. Possibly, it is suggested, identical twins share more of the environment than fraternal twins. As far as it goes, the argument is fine, but the available data go beyond it. We know, for example, that adopted children correlate in IQ more highly with natural parents than with adopting parents, unless placement in the adoptive home involves a direct attempt to match the child to the adopting parents in probable IQ. Identical twins whose families mistakenly think they are fraternal are more correlated than fraternal twins whose families mistakenly think they are identical. Identical twins growing up separated in foster homes are more correlated than fraternal twins growing up together with their own parents.

Not only do the correlations follow the path of blood relationship in general, they usually follow it numerically. The size of the correlations among parents and children, siblings, cousins from the first to the nth degree, twins, and so on is specified by the level of heritability, which can range from 0 to 100 per cent for any measurable trait. A given level of heritability goes with a certain pattern of correlations among relatives, although various complexities need to be taken into account in the calculations. For IQ, judging from the evidence as a whole, the level of heritability is unlikely to be less than 50 per cent and the most comprehensive modern estimates suggest a range between 60 per cent and 75 per cent in the United States. This is somewhat lower than the 80 per cent that Jensen cited in 1969, for reasons that I will comment on below, but it is a firmer estimate based on more and better data than his earlier one.

Although people do not wear IQ's on their shirts, they nevertheless get a message across to their friends. In America now, husbands and wives correlate in IQ about as much, if not slightly more, than brothers and sisters—about 50 per cent or just above it. Married couples correlate only about 30 per cent in height (this figure discounts the average sex difference in height). The tendency to match IQ's itself causes increased heritability, for it makes the scores within a family more similar, while increasing the differences between families. Assortative mating, which is the technical term, produces more extreme IQ's, both high and low, than if mating were random for intelligence. Willy-nilly, modern society produces selective mating for intelligence.

THE evidence for heritability has been accumulating since the Frenchman Alfred Binet started testing intelligence at the turn of the century. In fact, the evidence started accumulating before quantitative genetics emerged from evolutionary biology. Testing and genetics developed along parallel lines, although an occasional worker tried to bring them together. For example, Cyril Burt in England worked on the English standardization of the Binet test and also on the statistical procedures for estimating heritability, publishing in every decade of the century from the first to the eighth. Burt, it now turns out, was probably more voluminous than we knew in his lifetime; he apparently published under various pseudonyms when it suited him to have another party enter a scholarly exchange.

This discovery about one of testing's major early figures, which came to light in the London *Times* in 1976, has been followed by other revelations and pseudo-revelations of irregularities in Burt's work. I stopped counting when the New York *Times* published its fifth article about Burt in a few months. The newspapers did have a story, though they did not always put it in perspective and it probably did not deserve the repetition. Burt in his later years (he lived to eighty-eight and was publishing to the very end) may have fabricated data. His fabrications (if that is what they were) usually confirmed what he had, in fact, actually observed and published earlier, when he had the resources and vigor to test substantial numbers of people. His data, with this uncertainty now established, should no longer be used in serious estimates of heritability, as they were until quite recently. But leaving them out changes little, for Burt's data are, first, a small fraction of the total evidence and, second, they generally agree remarkably well with other people's data. Even when Burt's answer to a specific question was the earliest published, so that he had no source to copy, it has still been approximately confirmed by other workers. His work can no longer be relied on without independent verification, but it is false and unjust to characterize it as a hoax, as the press often does, echoing an altogether too ungenerous judgment by a few psychologists.

Burt and other researchers typically found slightly higher heritabilities for IQ scores in England than in the United States. Heritability is inherently statistical; it expresses, for a given population, the percentage of a trait's variation caused by genetic differences. Since it is a percentage, a ratio of one number to another, it expresses both the genetic and non-genetic sources of variation in a trait. Suppose my neighbor and I each grow squash in our gardens, using seeds from the same packet. The plants in each garden may resemble each other more than they resemble the plants in the other because of differences in soil, drainage, and the styles of the gardeners. Within each garden, relatively more of the variation is likely to be

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genetic than in the two gardens considered as a whole, and this would show up as a higher heritability in each garden taken individually. Moreover, if I am a less consistent gardener or if my garden setting is more varied, heritability may be lower in my garden than in my neighbor's, for the squash's size, abundance, or anything else I might measure. Similarly, if England is environmentally more homogeneous for intelligence than the United States, then, other things being equal, the heritability would be higher there than here. Other data besides Burt's suggest that this may be the case by perhaps 10 per cent or so, or it may have been when Burt and others collected their data, since heritabilities can change as environmental circumstances change. In 1969, using large doses of English data and the limited methods of analysis then available, Jensen estimated the heritability of IQ about 5 per cent to 15 per cent higher than seems correct for the United States now.

Significant heritability in a trait means that it is relatively resistant to changes in environment. Thus, insensitivity to environmental change is itself evidence for genetic control, albeit indirect. The upheavals of war sometimes provide such evidence. The test scores of those who grew up during the catastrophic disruptions of World War II show remarkable stability. For example, intelligence tests of thousands of nineteen-year-old native-born men in Holland in 1963 produced virtually the same average and distribution of scores as those of other samples of Dutch men. The significance of the finding is that the selected group had been conceived and born in famine-stricken districts of Holland during the winter of 1944-45, when daily caloric intakes had dropped to about one-third the normal ration. This indicates that test scores are unaffected by severe malnutrition of bearing mothers, although it does not rule out other sorts of dietary effects on mental development.

Another example of stability in test scores is a study of intellectual development in Warsaw a generation after World War II. The war destroyed about 70 per cent of the city, and afterward the Polish government razed the remaining slums. Strict egalitarianism guided the rebuilding of residential housing, intermixing families of manual workers, non-manual workers, and professionals. The study examined over 200 schools in Warsaw and found considerable variation in quality as measured by teacher training and to a lesser extent by other indices. There was a correlation between location in the city's center and schools with the most highly trained teachers, in spite of official policy. Virtually all the children born in 1963 and still living in Warsaw in 1974 were tested. Their scores on intelligence tests varied about as widely as they do, for example, in London, where the egalitarian impulse has not yet randomized social classes across neighborhoods. The average IQ in Warsaw was about 109, substantially higher than the norm of 100, which the authors of the study attribute to the flow of highly trained people, with their IQ's, toward the capital. (In the United Kingdom, too, it has been shown that London is the region with the highest IQ, but it is only about 102, according to one estimate.) In Warsaw, neither the quality of school nor the location of the residential area correlated with children's scores, but their parents' education and occupational status did, and did so about as much as they do in other regions of the world, such as the United States and Western Europe, where comparable data are available. Thus, a generation of homogenized residential patterns leaves unchanged the transmission of intellectual capacity from one generation to another and also the gap in IQ scores between the offspring of different occupational classes. This resistance to social control would be expected of a heritable trait.

Jensen's new book omits any question of heritability, for in the short run it is immaterial. In the short run, the questions about intelligence testing concern its meaning, its biases, and its predictive value, and these arise within a single generation, without considering transmission of test scores to the next generation or worrying about attempts to change them. In the long run, however, heritability is crucial, not just for intelligence but for any mental or physical trait that matters socially. Substantial heritabilities are like large unseen rocks in the stream of social life, shaping and at times distorting the effects of institutions and laws and defining private relationships. Heritability causes individuals, and the groups they are part of, to respond differently to common environments. This is obvious if we are thinking about people growing to different heights though sharing a diet and other physical conditions. It is less obvious but more worth understanding if it is performance in school we are concerned with. If we want education to fit everyone, it will have to be tailored to individual differences. And so it may be for all the other points of contact between us and our environment. In a society of legal and moral obligations, economic opportunities, hedonistic enticements, and emotional risks, biology may be setting limits and creating individual differences. No significant aspect of human conduct is yet known to be free of substantial heritability; the best case for substantial heritability is the case for intelligence-test scores.

What Do Intelligence Tests Measure?

BUT why should we care about those test scores at all? Critics of testing sometimes deny that the tests measure intelligence. This point of view has been expressed in a documentary film shown on network television (CBS's *The IQ Myth*) and has been repeated in any number of books, articles, and commentaries by generally responsible people.

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This outpouring has emboldened government agencies around the country to ban the test in public schools. The denial that tests actually measure intelligence is, in short, not an uncommon view in one form or another. It is, therefore, worth examining more closely, and Jensen's new book does so.

Two points need to be noted from the start. First, "intelligence" is not yet a concept that has been pinned down by a scientific discipline, the way "force" has been by physics. When we consider whether tests measure intelligence, we can only mean whether the scores correlate with what people generally understand by the word. Since people are unlikely to mean precisely the same thing, the correlation can only be approximate. But if there is any sort of correlation, then as a practical matter the test measures intelligence to some extent, however obliquely. Second, as a one-dimensional scale, the IQ cannot fully represent a multidimensional conception of intelligence. There are, consequently, many measurement procedures that yield not a single number like an IQ, but multiple scores, such as the verbal and quantitative tests used for college entrance. The objective measurement of intelligence can be made as multidimensional as the data and the occasion warrant.

Scores on well-standardized tests correlate highly with each other, which is as it should be. They do so even when the items are superficially utterly different. Let's look at a sampling of items, for their diversity is often forgotten by the critics. Most of these examples are described at greater length by Jensen. A block-design test requires us to copy a red-and-white design using small cubical blocks whose faces are painted red, white, or half-and-half. The scores this test yields correlate with scores on vocabulary tests, sentence-completion tests, or the number of digits we can recite back backward, having heard them once. Scores on any of these tests correlate with our speed and accuracy in being able to see a figure or a word in a picture that has been blotted out by random patches. Tests involving nothing but visual inferences from geometrical designs correlate with tests involving nothing but word usage. All the foregoing tests correlate with our ability to extract syntax from sentences using nonsense words, such as the following item (one of Jensen's examples):

> Pick the correct choice for the blank: A gelish lob relled perfully. I grolled the —— meglessly.
> (a) gelish (b) lob (c) relled (d) perfully.

Many people quickly sense the noun-ness of "lob," but some people do not.

The scores also correlate with tests that require reasoning with numbers or that ask us to figure out the family relationships among relatives in a family described in simple terms, or to find the odd or missing features in a series of distorted or mutilated pictures of familiar objects, or to count the cubes in a perspective view of a stack of cubes, or to say whether or not two drawings of a stack of blocks are two views of the same stack.

The foregoing further correlate with tests of common and uncommon knowledge, including such questions as: how many days are there in a week? or, who wrote *Antigone*? or, what is the boiling point of water? The people who answer the hard questions tend to answer all the easier ones too, and conversely for people who cannot answer the easy questions. On the whole, the same people can or cannot distinguish the meaning of similar but common words, such as "produce" and "yield" or "triumph" and "victory." The scores also correlate with scores on a series of finger mazes graded in difficulty.

The discovery that items as different as these result in correlated scores was no small finding about the nature of the human intellect, and this brief survey barely suggests the full range. Only those who do not know the variety of tests can believe that they are limited to specialized vocabulary or knowledge, to particular cognitive skills, or that they are explicitly geared to any subculture in our society. A deeper and more abstract solution is needed for the puzzle of what links together so varied an assortment. Some of the people who have thought about the puzzle say that the common trait involves extracting relationships from minimal data and applying the results to new data. The many different tests are different ways to tap the process. Vocabulary or word-usage tests sample the accumulated harvest of the underlying ability, for we learn most of language from everyday contexts, not from the dictionary or by rote memorization. How well we extract subtle relationships from scant data has much to do with our command of language. Tests of inference or perceptual analysis confront directly the ability to extract and apply relationships. The correlated scores show the underlying common capacity or capacities, which is what makes the test an intelligence test rather than merely a vocabulary or a spatial-analysis test.

The scores correlate, but not perfectly. The more similar two tests are, the more their scores correlate, but sometimes tests that seem quite different produce closely corresponding scores. The pattern of correlations permits an estimate of how much the scores depend on mental factors common to all the tests, which is often called "g" (for general) in the jargon of testing. A person with a high g will profit from it whenever it is called upon by a given test. Some tests that depend heavily on g are verbal analogies (e.g., fish is to scales as dog is to: lap; skin; fur; bite), spatial reasoning, number- or letter-series completion, and verbal distinctions. In addition, analysis uncovers other factors besides g—for example, verbal factors that draw verbal scores closer to each other than they would be on the basis of g alone, or spatial-

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orientation factors, perceptual speed factors, and so on. It is thus possible to design test batteries that measure g or other factors in some proportion for a particular practical or scientific purpose.

Do the scores correspond to people's impressions of intelligence? Various kinds of evidence say yes, more or less. Teachers' ratings of pupils' intelligence correlate with test scores, as do pupils' ratings of each other. Though substantial, the correlations are not perfect, so each of us is free to decide whether we trust the tests or the subjective ratings more. Test scores correlate with measures of social acceptance; also with being picked earlier when athletic or other sorts of teams are chosen and with being selected as a leader by classmates. Even without knowing the scores, parents tend to favor their higher-scoring children. Test scores correlate with adults' ratings of each other's potential for occupational success. African bushmen rating each other's intelligence correlate with scores on a test that measures g especially well. Even if you believe that approval and high regard by parents, teachers, and peers foster high scores, rather than vice versa, data show that scores measure something like intelligence or a related quality of leaders, co-workers, friends, playmates, and offspring.

What Do Test Scores Predict?

INTELLIGENCE tests endure in the face of unpopularity because they correlate with so many different kinds of things. We should start with school because success in school is what the tests were originally designed to predict. No fact about a six- or seven-year-old child predicts later success in school as well as an intelligence-test score. Not the parents' education, or their socioeconomic standing, their attitude toward school, or even their IQ's, correlate as well as the child's own score. The predictive power of the IQ is not overwhelming, leaving room for the other factors to have some effect, but, on the average, the other factors are small in comparison. Test scores predict school grades about as well if the test is given at the beginning or the end of the grading period. This finding argues against the popular claim that the correlation between IQ and grades results from teachers' grading so as to match the children's IQ's. Other findings also argue against it. IQ's predict objective measures of scholastic achievement better than grades. This is not because objective achievement tests are the same as IQ tests, for they are not. Grades, more than achievement scores, reflect the differences in teachers' grading standards, prejudices, and competences, which weaken their correlation with IQ. The difference between grades and achievement scores is the opposite of what it would be if the correlation with IQ resulted from teachers' expectations or self-fulfilling prophecies for their students. If teachers' expectations make a contribution, as some people believe they do, it must be relatively small on the average.

Not all subjects correlate with IQ equally. Even within a subject, topics do not correlate equally. Mathematics, science, and English generally correlate more than non-academic subjects like typing, woodworking, or learning to play a musical instrument. Within a subject, topics that require mostly time and memory correlate less than topics that require abstraction or mental manipulation, the thought problems rather than the rote problems. Repeating a list of just-heard numbers is less correlated with IQ than repeating them in reverse order. The former requires memory alone; the latter, memory plus mental work. If teachers equalize the time spent on a subject by their pupils, achievement scores may vary less among the students, but they correlate even more with IQ than when the students are left to their own devices. Reading scores correlate with IQ, but reading can be subdivided into two components, translation from text to speech and comprehension: IQ correlates more with the latter than the former. Most children who read poorly also have problems with tests of oral comprehension, involving no reading. But dyslexics, who may actually be having trouble with the translation from text to speech, often have high verbal IQ scores, if the test does not require extensive reading. The speed of learning something new may correlate with IQ, but once it is learned and routinized, the correlations may decrease or vanish. Typing, driving a car, doing the multiplication table, reciting the alphabet may be examples. That is why some items turn up on IQ tests at one age level, while they are being learned, but disappear later, after they have been mastered. IQ may then predict the speed of learning but not the final level of performance for relatively simple intellectual activities. If an activity continues to demand abstraction or cannot be routinized, the IQ probably correlates with both the speed of learning and the final level.

Intelligence-test scores correlate with scholastic work from the first grade on. In college, and even more so in graduate schools, the correlation begins to shrink, although it does not vanish entirely. When a law school admits only people with IQ's in the top 2 or 3 per cent of the population, it has filtered out most of the correlation between IQ and performance. This does not mean that intelligence is irrelevant to the study of law, as the law school would quickly discover if it started admitting candidates from the full range of scores. With only the top 3 per cent in attendance, performance correlates with other attributes, mainly interest and *sitzfleisch*. Nevertheless, even in selective colleges and professional schools, intelligence-test scores still retain a trace of predictiveness, though not as powerful as in the almost unselected population of large elementary or high schools.

College admission often depends on a mixture of grades, scores on achievement and aptitude tests, subjective assessments, even geography and demography. Colleges go through this complex

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procedure partly because their goals are more subtle and diverse than just to produce the largest number of A grades in next year's freshman class. They are, indeed, not merely picking individuals but trying to create a student body whose characteristics may concern many people—the students themselves, alumni, faculty, administration, and, lately, the federal government and the general public. But if colleges were trying to maximize academic performance alone, their best single predictor would probably be scholastic-achievement scores. Intelligence-test scores would predict also, but not as well because they are less sensitive to the other personal qualities that contribute to success in school. But achievement scores and intelligence scores are themselves so highly correlated that the differences in prediction are negligible. It may nevertheless seem fairer to reward the student who has worked hard for high achievement scores in spite of a not so high IQ rather than the converse, the high-IQ underachiever. Not only fairer, it is good practical policy, for overachievers are generally better risks than underachievers. Without intelligence-test scores (or a close correlate like scholastic-aptitude tests), distinctions like this would be hard to draw.

THE correlates of intelligence reach beyond school, as sociologists and economists are showing. Consider socioeconomic status (SES), the modern counterpart of class. People can rate occupations subjectively for status or prestige and the result closely resembles any one of a variety of objective classifications of occupational status. Any of these scales correlates with IQ. Jobs rated high are typically filled by people with high IQ's, and so on through the scale. The stratification of society into a gradient of prestige approximately parallels the gradient of measured intelligence. A full account of intellectual meritocracy is too technical and at present too much in contention to attempt here, but several qualifications can be noted. The correlation between IQ and SES is only moderate, lower than the correlation between IQ and success in school. But we should distinguish two correlations involving IQ and status. The one just mentioned is between individual scores and individual SES. The other correlation is between the average IQ in an occupation and the average status of the occupation. Taking several hundred occupational categories and the average IQ of the people in those categories gives quite high correlations, near the limits imposed by the measurements themselves.

The correlation between individual IQ and social status is diluted by arbitrary prejudices like those against women or blacks and also by individual circumstances. A young person might be a stock clerk, on the way to promotion to shop foreman or plant manager. Someone else might have just opened a motel with inherited capital, and might be two years away from bankruptcy and a job as a salesman in a clothing store. At any moment, streams of people are moving through jobs and levels of status, and the correlation with individual test scores cannot register where they are headed. On the average, however, they tend to be headed toward a level highly correlated with intelligence scores. The conceptual demands of many occupations are not always recognized as such because they may not seem intellectual. In a serious poker game, the player who thinks it is all a matter of luck will in time lose to the one who knows how subtle the game is. As a gambling man, I would wager that the difference in players correlates with IQ, barring differences in experience.

Economists prefer income to SES as a measure, but they see the same picture, broadly speaking. Income, too, correlates with intelligence-test scores, though slightly less than SES.

Sometimes it is said that the fundamental relationship is between income or SES and not IQ but educational level. Society does, in fact, often require people to find a niche via education. Even legislation gets involved in some of the higher occupations, requiring graduation from professional schools or certification by examination for doctors, lawyers, accountants, and others. At the same time, the most consequential jobs, which usually pay well and carry high status, are often hard to routinize and demand abstraction and inference. These are the very traits predicted by test scores, whether for school work or real work. What people do in school shows their intelligence, but also other traits that count at work, such as dependability or adaptability or willingness to work for socially approved rewards. School funnels into its records a blend of personal traits that affect our dealings with people afterward, including a large component measured by test scores.

Apparently the point is easy to miss. For example, a new book by Christopher Jencks and his associates (*Who Gets Ahead?*) presents convincing evidence for the network of correlations connecting test scores, school success, occupational standing, and earnings. But then, the conclusion says:

> We have shown . . . that a nontrivial fraction of background's effect on success derives from the fact that background affects cognitive skills. But it is not clear that cognitive skills are, or should be, synonymous with "merit." A large vocabulary seems to help a man get through school, and getting through school clearly helps him enter a high-status occupation and earn more money than most men do. But this does not prove that a man "needs" a large vocabulary in order to perform competently in most highly paid jobs. Furthermore, even if such jobs *do* demand a large vocabulary, it does not follow that this is either technically inevitable or morally desirable. The same logic applies to educational attainment. Educational credentials are essential for obtaining some lucrative jobs. But it does not follow that educational credentials *ought* to be essential for these jobs. If what we want is

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competence, for example, we might be better off dispensing with academic credentials and setting up on-the-job selection procedures for identifying incompetents.

What this argument neglects is that if "on-the-job selection procedures" can predict performance, especially at the higher occupational levels, they will correlate with both intelligence-test scores and school records. No one has yet invented, or even proposed, a test that could predict competence in demanding occupations yet not correlate with both school record and IQ.

The predictive power of test scores is sometimes credited to the family's social background. At the extremes this is certainly correct. A Rothschild or a Rockefeller does not compete on an even footing with the children of migrant laborers, either in school or at work. The different home backgrounds no doubt affect IQ and eventual social status. But the question is not whether such things happen, it is, how much of a contribution they make overall to the correlation between SES and IQ. Numerous kinds of evidence show that social background cannot be the whole story and may be relatively minor in the United States at present, when averaged over the entire population.

For example, occupational differences between brothers cannot be explained by differences in SES background, which they share, especially if they are close or equal in age. Nevertheless, brothers sometimes land at different occupational levels. (Sisters have not figured in most sociological studies like this.) Thus something more than social background must be involved. The wheel of fortune may spin mysteriously, but the evidence says that the intelligence-test-score difference between brothers predicts (though not entirely) the difference in their progress up or down the socioeconomic ladder. Other studies confirm the point by showing that brothers rise or fall from the family's socioeconomic level in some proportion to their test scores. That we all know exceptions to this conclusion does not alter its validity in general.

Though data on adopted children are scarce, it seems that their IQ's correlate more highly with the SES or school records of their natural parents than of the adopting parents. The children may not know or know about, let alone live with, their natural parents in order to correlate with them. This shows that a person's socioeconomic and educational fate depends in part on traits like those measured by an IQ test and that the traits pass to their offspring more via the genes than by the home environment. Here, I hasten to add that the correlations are low, though statistically significant, leaving considerable room in principle for adopting parents to contribute to their foster children's scores and other traits.

OCCASIONALLY accounts in the popular press report a failure to find much correlation between IQ and performance on the job, which then serves as an argument against using the scores or any correlate of them to select employees. Judges often rely on this argument in job-discrimination cases. But the lack of correlation means different things for different occupations. Performance may not correlate much with IQ in occupations for which most of the population has already been screened out. We know, in general, that the higher the occupational index of an occupational category, the smaller the variation of IQ's in it. Physicians and lawyers and large-corporation executives are probably more homogeneous in intelligence than house painters and short-order cooks. Purely on statistical grounds, correlations between IQ and performance within an occupation should diminish toward the top of the occupational ladder. For occupations at the other end of the ladder, low correlations between performance and IQ may reflect the routinized character of the job. Between the extremes must be the selective movement of IQ up and down the scale of performance that yields the known correlation with status. We may or may not admire the people who rise toward the higher rungs of the ladder, but intelligence is often a factor. On the whole, it can be shown that random placement of IQ's in occupations, if it were conceivable, would exact a great loss in gross national product, let alone in the quality and safety of life. The differences among people in mental capacity are so large that no society can long afford the indulgence of ignoring them, as the Chinese have recently decided after disastrously experimenting with egalitarianism in schools and occupations. In the United States at present, it has been estimated that more stringent objective selection than we use now would yield significant economic gains, but this is not a matter to be decided on purely economic grounds. (This point comes up again in the next section, on test bias.)

Test predictions reach even beyond conventional occupations. For example, the criminal population varies around an IQ about 10 points below the general average of 100. We are fascinated by stories about wily criminals, who may not often get caught and have their IQ's measured, but by far most crimes are impulsive acts, the outcome of general attitudes rather than long-range planning or cautious execution. The intellectual component of most crimes is fairly small, compared to the demands of legitimate work. As far as we can tell, the population of criminals in general would not test much higher in IQ than the population of apprehended criminals. Test scores are a better predictor of criminal behavior than socioeconomic status, and if measures of personality are combined with those of intelligence, prediction is even better. The higher crime rate among men than women arises from other attributes than intelligence, such as personality and social role. The widely touted XYY chromosomal abnormality in a few men does contribute to the

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risk of criminal behavior, but only slightly and mainly because it lowers the IQ a few points.

How, if the foregoing is a fair summary of the data, can the predictiveness of IQ for school and beyond remain in doubt? That good question deserves an answer. Here are six reasons for the continuing dispute about test scores as predictors:

1. *Tradition.* Standardized mental testing is recent, but explanations of human behavior and society are ancient. Cultural inertia resists a new account of significant events in our lives, such as success or failure or the prospects for our children.

2. *Professionalism.* A narrower version of 1. IQ is psychology's creation, and, as the new kid on the block, is not always kindly received by the older disciplines, by economists, sociologists, political scientists, and philosophers, who each have their own, non-psychological, way of dealing with human variation.

3. *Alternatives.* IQ is not the best predictor of many sociological or economic variables at some levels of analysis. Schooling, for example, predicts social status better, but we miss something if we do not also note that IQ is the best predictor of school performance. The best predictors of criminal behavior are sex and age, not IQ, but within an age and sex grouping, IQ is probably the best predictor. IQ is often the silent partner in standard sociological and economic explanations of many aspects of society.

4. *Unpopularity.* Since IQ is relatively resistant to change, it is a bit frightening to believe that it matters. The criterion for belief in the importance of IQ is therefore set higher than the criterion for belief in its unimportance. This is a reasonable defense against unwelcome news if it is not an absolute unwillingness to accept evidence.

5. *Insulation.* Because the IQ correlates with schooling, status, income, and many other less global aspects of our lives, we move in a social world already stratified for test scores. Our friends, spouses, children, colleagues, competitors, and neighbors are not randomly spread across the range of scores. More often than not, their scores approximate ours. We are relatively insulated from scores in other parts of the range. Consequently, we underestimate intellectual differences among people and their social importance.

6. *Politics.* Marxists and egalitarians dislike evidence that individual differences can be socially significant. If the evidence looks strong, they may seek other ways to counter it, such as by trying to discredit those who publicize the evidence.

Are Intelligence Tests Biased?

The received opinion is that intelligence tests are biased against people from lower socioeconomic levels and minority groups. To evaluate the opinion, we should start by focusing "bias" more clearly than it often is. Tests are not biased simply because some people get higher scores than others, any more than yardsticks are biased because they show some people to be taller than others. Bias means that the measurement represents different things for different people, which is not the same as simply showing a difference between people. For example, bias in intelligence testing suggests that a test score for a member of group A would be associated with better performance in school than is the same score for a member of group B. People in group A could reasonably protest that the test is biased against them if it underpredicts their performance.

Or bias may be shown if certain items in a test specifically favor members of one group rather than another. If people in group A are privy to information not available to those in group B, then items drawing on the information are biased against group B. The differences in their scores on these items would not correspond to a difference in intelligence as usually understood. The extreme form of this kind of bias is when group B gets an advance copy of the test plus its answers but group A does not. More commonly this kind of bias is thought to apply to items on intelligence tests that call on specific knowledge, such as knowing the boiling point of water.

Jensen's new book explores both of these kinds of bias, plus several other lesser varieties, in great detail. No comparably exhaustive, meticulous treatment is available and so once again his work will be the point of departure for other scholars. His conclusions, which I will summarize below, have nevertheless been foreshadowed by his own and other earlier work. It is unlikely that significantly different conclusions can be supported by the available data.

There is, however, one kind of bias that, by its very nature, is not readily evaluated empirically. Perhaps bias in our society suppresses not only test scores but also the measures of performance in school and on the job. This is, in effect, to suppose that bias in testing parallels prejudices in school and elsewhere. The matching suppressions would simply push a group's average below the population averages for both test scores and the correlates of test scores, without leaving a clear trace in the data. This is a hard argument to refute or to defend, for it is by definition invisible in the data. Nevertheless, it apparently is the right story to tell about some immigrant populations of the past, struggling with the vagaries of English on tests, in school, and at work, as well as with less obvious aspects of intellectual and cultural assimilation. They may have seemed in the past to be stuck at the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder because of low intelligence or low test scores. Then, they gradually merged into the mainstream population, no longer a depressed or oppressed minority. But, as Jensen notes, tests have generally been

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good to immigrant populations or their children. The ascent up the ladder has typically been anticipated by rising test scores placing many of the children of immigrants, if not the immigrants themselves, within reach of higher education and all that goes with it. At this point we simply cannot say if something similar is to be the story of today's depressed groups, for it may or may not be. But banning intelligence tests is hardly the right remedy for this kind of bias, wherever it is happening, for the tests can be a relatively quick escape from suppression, as they have been in the past.

Test bias is no longer just an academic question. For example, Judge Robert F. Peckham recently decided, in a federal district court in California, that intelligence-test scores violate constitutional guarantees because they are biased against black schoolchildren. The prime evidence for bias was the disproportionate frequency of black children selected for special classes on the basis of test scores. The New York *Times* cited Judge Peckham's figures: "Although black students made up only 27.5 per cent of the student population, blacks accounted for 62 per cent of the students in classes for the mentally retarded." This case exemplifies court cases by the hundreds in the last decade because it deals with bias in testing in relation to ethnic-group membership. Judge Peckham might have had other grounds besides bias in testing for banning the special classes. It seems to me, at any rate, that children are stigmatized needlessly by being designated as retarded when they require special education. Even so, Judge Peckham chose test bias as the basis of his decision and he cited disproportionate numbers of children as evidence.

Discussing group differences in test scores is intensely uncomfortable, like a breach of etiquette or worse. Well-meaning people usually avoid the issue, which may have been the right attitude when a person's ethnic background had no legal standing and the goal was to make it have no social standing either. But the situation has changed, even though social equity remains the goal, for ethnic politics and jurisprudence are upon us. The government and the courts have become entangled in the delicate web of individual and group differences. The time has come to look closely at the facts and to see what they suggest about the possibilities for ethnic fairness in our society.

The first fact to know is that individuals often vary more than the groups they belong to. Within each race, for example, is found the full range of IQ scores. Millions of American blacks exceed the average white score; millions of whites score below the average black. All other known psychological traits, intellectual and otherwise, that vary at all vary within the races and overlap between the races. To treat members of a group uniformly or to expect them to behave uniformly violates the most salient psychological fact we know, which is the uniqueness of individuals. Individuality is far too high a price to pay for the benefits of ethnic politics. Indeed, racism itself starts with the denial of individuality. Happily, the evidence strongly affirms the fact that individual differences are vastly more important than group differences. Given the overlapping distributions of scores, and assuming for the sake of argument a color-blind society, blacks and whites should be found on every rung of the social ladder, although not necessarily in the same proportions.

Disproportionate frequencies cannot by themselves show bias, as other court decisions besides Judge Peckham's have noted. It is not bias that increases the risk of Tay-Sachs disease for Jews or that suppresses the number of whites in the National Basketball Association. Disproportion does not even establish a presumption of bias in any empirical sense, though legally it may. Whenever a trait varies widely within groups, there is a statistical likelihood that it will vary on the average between groups too. Since most group differences in traits are small, socially insignificant, or both, we may not notice or care about them. When the differences are socially important, they strain our social institutions and clash with the underlying egalitarianism of our social tradition. Judge Peckham tried to relieve the strain by inferring bias in the tests that recorded the difference. But to demonstrate bias requires more analysis than seems to have figured in his decision. From what I have seen of the many recent cases involving claims of bias in objective tests, it would be an understatement to say that courts and legislatures do not always welcome or accept competent expert help, perhaps because it is not obvious to laymen that it is needed. But it is, if the decisions are not to do more harm than good.

Bias may be approached from various directions, as noted above. A practical approach involves the predictive function of testing. Does a score predict the same for a member of group A as it does for a member of group B? If not, the test is biased against the group whose performance is underpredicted. It is generally supposed that intelligence tests are biased in this sense against people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly those from the minority groups favored by affirmative-action programs. The evidence, which is now considerable in some areas, refutes the claim of predictive bias in almost all cases. In studies of primary, secondary, and college students, in the military, and in a large number of occupations, there is virtually no evidence of significant underprediction of performance by IQ scores, either for comparisons across SES within a race or across races. With only some minor qualifications that Jensen elaborates, a given test score has essentially the same predictive value for people through-

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out the socioeconomic scale, of whatever race.

It is also generally believed that test items drawing on specific cultural knowledge would distinguish between classes or races better than items that do not, such as the geometrical-inference tests described earlier. But this belief too is refuted by the data. Culturally specific items typically show smaller differences between blacks and whites than items that seem to be relatively free of cultural information. Blacks and white differ less on verbal tests than on non-verbal tests, but the distinction is of minor quantitative significance. This can be contrasted with the evidence that the verbal portions of tests are, in fact, especially difficult for Mexican Americans and other people who speak English as a second language, such as some American Indians.

Jensen also summarizes the evidence bearing on other familiar claims of bias. He finds no convincing data that the race of the examiner makes any practical difference and a fair amount of data that it does not. Nor does he find evidence in different groups of significant differential effects of anxiety, test sophistication, and a variety of other factors that might have been suspected.

The hypothesis that tests are biased in prediction or assessment is therefore not supported by mounting evidence. But bias is only one question to consider in the use of tests as predictors. Another concerns predictiveness itself, namely, how good is it? The simpler or more mechanical a job is, the less we would expect intelligence-test scores to predict about performance. We noted earlier that test scores sometimes predict initial learning of an activity better than final performance. Each shift in an employee's duties or change in conditions of work may temporarily boost the predictions of performance by test scores, but then prediction would subside as a new routine is established. Different jobs require more or less of this sort of adaptiveness, hence more or less correlation between performance and IQ. For relatively routine, unchanging jobs, it may or may not be *unfair* to use an IQ test (or its strong correlates, such as school record) to screen candidates, but it may be *unwise* as social policy. Any loss in productivity in these jobs by not using test scores or their correlates for selection may be only slight, hence more than offset by political gains. Thus, even if tests are not biased, we may decide against using them for selection when their predictive power is marginal.

In schools and for more complex occupations, the predictive power of tests is substantial and the consequences of interfering with the natural sorting of ability may be profound. If intelligence testing is to be banned, as many judges and legislators would have it, the result is not likely to be what these very people may expect or hope. The scores are firmly correlated with much of the rest of our behavior, and the correlates would persist after the scores vanished. There would still be differences in scholastic performance and in status and income. There would still be achievement scores, competency tests, occupational inventories, etc., which correlate with intelligence tests and perhaps predict later performance even better. There would still be correlations between parents and children and, for the time being at least, disproportions among people from different races and SES backgrounds in movement up and down the socioeconomic ladder.

Without intelligence tests, the main practical difference would be in schools, where there would be less chance of spotting the gifted child whose achievement is lagging or the average child who is failing. Perhaps they are children from homes that fail to inspire caring about schoolwork. Perhaps they have emotional problems or pedagogical problems. More often than not, the children will be from deprived or disrupted homes. Without intelligence-test scores, these children are more likely to slip through school with their capacities unrecognized and unappreciated. History suggests that, imperfect as intelligence testing is, it can see through the veneer of cultural advantage or disadvantage better than anything else yet devised while still predicting later competence in school and beyond. When a district in England, for example, stopped using intelligence tests to select children for college-preparatory secondary schools, the proportion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds fell. For the sake of the culturally disadvantaged, we should not be banning the tests but improving their diagnostic power and using them more intelligently.

BECAUSE intelligence-test scores correlate with so much that people care about, the controversy leaves virtually no one untouched or indifferent. The complexities of the subject are compounded by the emotions it awakens. People who usually keep good track of things seem to lose their way remarkably quickly when intelligence testing comes up. It may, therefore, not be out of place to conclude with a simple guide through the thicket—first the don'ts, then the dos:

Do *not* blame the tests for the differences they measure. What really counts is that people differ in mental capacity enough that society cannot avoid using rewards to attract competent people into consequential occupations. This is the process whose outcome is modern social stratification and it goes on with or without testing. Tests record—may even facilitate—the process; they do not create it. The process will continue until variations in mental capacity no longer matter in society, an eventuality one can imagine but not soon.

Do *not* assume that group differences in test scores are genetic, even if individual differences are to a degree. In particular, the differential treatment of blacks and whites in society makes it

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impossible to draw firm conclusions about the origins of the average difference between the races in intelligence-test scores.

Do *not* conclude that all forms of test bias have been disproven. No empirical evidence of bias has been uncovered, but it remains possible that both the test and the performance it predicts are biased downward by minority status. However, this last sort of bias is not an argument against the use of tests for predictive purposes. In fact, history suggests that tests help overcome it.

Do *not* expect tests to be equally predictive for all jobs. Performance in relatively simple, routine occupations would not correlate as highly with test scores as performance in conceptually demanding or varying occupations. The intellectually simpler jobs tend to be at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder; the more demanding ones are further up. It is, therefore, likely that randomizing intelligence levels across occupations would disrupt productivity more at the higher occupational levels than at the lower ones. To the extent that job quotas randomize intelligence levels, their direct effects are dependent on where on the ladder they are being applied. This does not answer the political or moral questions about quotas, but it may help define them.

AND here are the dos:

Do think of people as individuals, not members of groups. Not only is it good manners to do so, but it is empirically sound. Relatively little of the variation among people, in intelligence and other important traits, can be accounted for by the social or ethnic groups they belong to.

Do use intelligence-test scores as one of several diagnostic instruments in schools and do so often. The misuses of intelligence-test scores are minor compared to the pedagogic value of a relatively neutral assessment of mental capacity. Tests may not be as culturally neutral as we would like, but they are more neutral than most if not all of the other diagnostic information a teacher has to work with. The culturally deprived populations are probably most vulnerable when intelligence tests are banned.

Do allow intelligence tests or their close correlates to continue pushing people up the occupational ladder, via higher education or otherwise. This is how a meritocracy should work, and it is the benign remedy for arbitrary aristocracy. It is also sound public policy, for it favors competence where incompetence can be most costly and dangerous, in the positions society rewards most highly.

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Korah's Revolt

Robert J. Milch

THE Exodus from Egypt and its aftermath—the theophany at Sinai and the giving of the Torah—have always occupied a central place in Jewish thought and lore, for through these events, so tradition tells us, God chose the Israelites to be His people. Tradition also tells us, however, that the Israelites were not very likely human material for the distinction, except perhaps in the genetic sense. Restive and unruly almost from the moment of leaving Egypt, and displaying an astounding indifference to miracles and divine benefactions, they repeatedly turned against the Deity Who had singled them out, channeling their discontent into hostility for the human leader He had appointed.

The revolt against Moses led by Korah, his first cousin, is the most dramatic of several such episodes in the Bible. As ramified and embellished in the midrashic literature of the talmudic period, the tale of Korah's revolt has much to say about the kind of commitment God demanded of the Israelites and, indeed, that Judaism, or perhaps any monotheistic religion, expects of its adherents even today.

A thorough approach to the story of Korah's revolt, or to any other biblical narrative for that matter, has several possible dimensions. First of all, there is the basic biblical record—in this case, the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers plus a few scattered references elsewhere, all of which, from the standpoint of traditional Jews, and of many Christians as well, is revealed sacred history. Next there is the midrashic elaboration of the biblical account, piously held to embody traditions dating back to the time of Moses but really an interpretative retelling of the story by later generations. Finally, there is the story behind the story—the actual historical events, in one or another modern reconstruction, that provided the raw material for the biblical author.

Our main focus here will not be on the "real" Korah of history, assuming he could be recovered from the sources, but on the Korah who emerges from the midrashic understanding of the biblical text. Much as Malory's Arthur and Shakespeare's Hamlet, and not the historical personages on whom they are patterned, are full-blown, living figures in the Western cultural imagination, so this Korah, the one who lives in the Jewish mythic and literary consciousness, has for two thousand years been the only "real" Korah for Judaism.

Korah plays a role in just one biblical episode—the revolt in which he lost his life but gained a perverse kind of immortality. The revolt occurred several months after the Israelites departed from Egypt, but it took place against a background of opposition to Moses which began even before the Exodus and became more intense with every day spent in the wilderness and every new hardship. From the incident of the quail, right after the crossing of the Red Sea; to the making of the golden calf at the very foot of Sinai, where God had just appeared to them; to the debacle in Kadesh, the gateway of Canaan, where they threatened to appoint a new leader and return to Egypt—the Israelites resisted Moses at every turn, seemingly doing all they could to dash his hopes of molding them into a new people. In due course, their recalcitrance culminated in a final great effort to rid themselves of the man sent to remake them.

To the extent that a chronological sequence can be adduced from the narratives in the Five Books of Moses—and the classic commentators, it should be noted, insisted that textual propinquity does not necessarily have a bearing on relationship in time—the Torah probably saw the great revolt as following close upon the return of the twelve spies to the Israelite encampment at the oasis of Kadesh-Barnea (modern 'Ayn Qudays in the southwestern part of the Negev). Here, a panic broke out when ten of the twelve reported that Canaan, the promised land, could not be conquered. The succeeding events can be read in various ways. The Torah itself maintains that the Israelites, because they lacked the faith to press on to their ultimate destination, were condemned to wander in the desert until the entire generation of the Exodus had died out—an obvious case of doctoring the evidence, since whatever else it may say or suggest (and, among other things, it indicates that an invasion of Canaan mounted from Kadesh ended in defeat), the text clearly shows that Moses tried to

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make the people go along with an unpopular plan, failed, and then backed down rather than risk losing his hold on them.

Quite naturally, the setback at Kadesh, in which Moses could be seen as following rather than leading, encouraged some of his many opponents to believe that their moment had arrived. Two chapters on, in Numbers 16, which some modern scholars regard as a composite account incorporating memories of more than one incident, a powerful coalition of dissident factions is said to have joined forces against Moses, among them the whole tribe of Reuben, several clans of Levi, and 250 distinguished chieftains who are described as "men of renown" and members of the assembly.

The uprising involved two separate but closely related issues, one political, the other religious. The insurgent Levites, led by Korah, were trying to regain the traditional sacerdotal prerogatives that Moses had taken from them when he appointed his brother Aaron high priest of the recently completed Tabernacle and made the sacred cultus the exclusive province of Aaron's sons and descendants, who now became Israel's hereditary priestly caste. The Reubenites had more far-reaching goals. Having enjoyed a certain preeminence among the Hebrew clans in the patriarchal era, reflected by the fact that their eponym was said to have been the first-born son of Jacob, they apparently saw the tribal confederation Moses was welding as a threat to their status. Led at first by Dathan, Abiram, and On, and then by Dathan and Abiram after On dropped out (according to the Midrash because his wife saw that he would end up second-best no matter which side won), they seem to have declared their independence, probably assuming that some of the other tribes would follow suit and join them in a new confederation. Korah and his group may have contemplated a settlement in which the Aaronites would agree to restore at least some of their privileges, but for Dathan and Abiram, who totally repudiated the authority of Moses, there was no possibility of reconciliation.

Once the rebels had committed themselves, Moses proposed a parley. Dathan and Abiram refused. Korah accepted, and in the ensuing confrontation, he angrily asserted that all members of the tribe of Levi were equally holy; none, therefore, should be elevated above the others, and all were entitled to participate in the sacred service. (The text, amalgamating Korah's story with that of Dathan and Abiram, has Korah refer to all Israelites, but his argument only makes sense if the original term is restored.) The denouement was swift and unambiguous. When Korah and his Levite associates appeared at the Tabernacle bearing incense offerings, in response to a challenge by Moses to see whether God would permit them to perform a cultic act, the earth opened. Korah was swallowed alive, as were Dathan and Abiram sulking back in the camp, and a fire from heaven consumed the 250 chieftains. The next day, when an angry mob demonstrated against Moses in protest, another 14,700 people were killed in a plague sent by God as a punishment.

For the historian, the story in Numbers 16 is rich in veiled hints about the early development of the Israelite confederacy, some of them projected backward from a later time: a new aristocratic establishment supplanting the old one; the dominant tribe of an earlier era trying to hold its place during a period of reorganization and realignment; rival priestly guilds contending for control of the national cult. More important for our purposes, however, is the attributed religious meaning which the revolt took on in subsequent Jewish lore and thought.

Our starting point might well be the fact that the uprising is usually referred to as Korah's revolt even though Dathan and Abiram helped to foment it and met the same fate as Korah. According to the Midrash, which, of course, postdates the account in Numbers by many centuries, all three were active in Israelite (and Egyptian) affairs before the Exodus, but during the period from the Exodus to the uprising the two Reubenites were far more prominent than Korah, and it is they, and not Korah, who are mentioned in the Bible's other references to the revolt, Deuteronomy 11:6 and Psalms 106:17. Notwithstanding, the tradition gave pride of place to Korah. Presumably this was because Dathan and Abiram, unlike Korah, were pursuing a primarily political goal, although in a certain sense, it must be admitted, the distinction is artificial, since no aspect of the life of a covenant community like ancient Israel was wholly secular or completely devoid of what we today would call religious elements.

If the narrative in Numbers 16 could be read in isolation from the whole process of Israelite sacred history, it might appear that Korah's goals were also primarily secular, for entitlement to the lucrative franchise of officiating in the Tabernacle had obvious economic and social benefits, and Moses was being charged with misusing his position to advance his family's private interests. The chapter, however, is but a small part of the Torah, a work permeated by the well-nigh axiomatic conviction that Moses was a true prophet and that the rules he imposed on Israel all emanated from the Deity.

When the story of the revolt is taken in context with this, it becomes evident that Korah's acts were unequivocally in the religious sphere, for they involved a direct repudiation of explicit instructions that God was said to have given for the conduct of the service in His sanctuary, both then and forevermore. Consequently, Korah's actions constituted sinfulness of an entirely different order from that of the two Reubenite princes, who were not so much rebels against God as self-seeking agents of discord, partly for its own sake and partly to aggrandize themselves. Surely this is why

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the Jerusalem Talmud, in one of the earlier discussions of the Hebrew term *apikoros* (defined in Jastrow's talmudic dictionary as "one irreverent of authority and religion . . . a heretic" and in Tractate Sanhedrin of the Mishnah as one who has forfeited his place in the world to come), applied the designation to Korah but not to his Reubenite coconspirators.

Apikoros is probably most familiar nowadays, if at all, as *epikoyres,* an old-fashioned Yiddish appellation for the kind of freethinker who is nonobservant on principle rather than from ignorance of his religious obligations, but in rabbinic usage, in the era of the Talmud and Midrash, an *apikoros* was someone who actively challenged the authority, validity, or sanctity of the comprehensive body of Jewish law that the sages were constructing through dialectical elaboration and expansion of the written Torah. The sages, though they did not formulate their ideas in abstract terms, clearly understood at least some of the theological implications of Korah's condemnation of Moses, and because of this depicted him, in the literature they were compiling, as the *apikoros par excellence.*

ACCORDING to the sages, Korah prepared the ground for his revolt by continually finding or creating opportunities to persuade the people that the Torah was irrational and unjust. Since the literature indicates that Korah did not deny the Sinaitic revelation or the divine origin of the Decalogue, it would seem that his main target was not so much Moses himself as the body of law he was promulgating, though the two, as will be seen, were closely intertwined. The sages did not put it so explicitly, and probably intended something quite different, but the Korah they depicted can be viewed as one of the first Jewish thinkers to regard the *halakhic* system as man-made and to realize that it often does not manage to bridge the gap between the letter of the law and its presumed intent, seemingly considering the former more important than the latter if the two are treated separately. Since the imperatives of his position as divinely-inspired lawgiver obliged Moses to reject attempts to define and directly achieve the law's purposes, and to insist instead on literal observance, the midrashic stories repeatedly show Korah as a humanistic exponent of "common sense," and have him backing Moses, the defender of the Torah, into a logical corner, in the process making him look small-minded and hypocritical.

A case in point, found in Tractate Sanhedrin of the Jerusalem Talmud and in other sources as well: the law requires that a *mezuzah* be affixed to the doorpost of every Jewish house (Deuteronomy 6:9, 11:20). There is no explanation of this *mitzvah* in the Torah, which requires only that certain scriptural passages be inscribed on the doorpost (the *mezuzah* itself, a cylinder containing a parchment bearing the passages, came sometime later), but traditionally the *mezuzah* has been understood as a reminder of God's presence and of the Jew's commitment to his faith. Apparently with this interpretation in mind, Korah once asked Moses whether a house filled with Torah scrolls needed a *mezuzah,* the point being that a reminder and a few brief lines hardly seem necessary when the whole Torah is present. The Torah, though, speaks only of the few lines and not of reminders; predictably, therefore, Moses answered yes, to which Korah contemptuously replied, and one may imagine him at this point turning to the onlookers with an I-told-you-so expression, "The 270 sections of the Torah aren't enough, but the two sections in the *mezuzah* are!" Several incidents of this kind are recorded. Korah's approach was always the same, and so was that of Moses: the requirement of a blue-threaded fringe (Numbers 15:38; inoperative since ancient times) applies even to garments made entirely of blue cloth; a small shiny spot on the skin denotes impurity (Leviticus 13:2-4) but not a spot covering a person's whole body; and so on—in short, the Torah is the law, and the law must be obeyed.

Social questions also came within Korah's purview. The Bible, as is well known, displays an extraordinary concern for the plight of the poor and helpless, but all legal systems, Torah included, deal of necessity with groups and generalities, and since it is not possible to provide in advance for every possible situation, it sometimes happens that individuals become victims rather than beneficiaries of the law. Thus in the penultimate demonstration, immediately preceding the outbreak of the uprising, Korah regaled a public meeting with an account of the tribulations of an impoverished widow trying to eke out a living in a society governed by Torah law—how it really was, he might have said, when you ignored the moralizing and the casuistry and went out into the street.

The unfortunate woman, Korah claimed, wanted only to keep herself and her two daughters above water. When she set about plowing her field, however, she was condemned for yoking an ox and an ass together (in violation of Deuteronomy 22:10); she was condemned again for illegally mixing seeds of different kinds (in violation of Leviticus 19:19); and then, in quick succession, was forced to give the first fruits to the priests (Deuteronomy 26:2), to leave the gleanings and the corners of her tiny field untouched at harvest time (Leviticus 23:22), and to pay a tithe when her small store of grain was threshed (Numbers 18:8, 21). Barely able to make ends meet, she gave up farming altogether, sold the field, and bought a few lambs with the proceeds. Now the priests took the firstlings and a tithe of the wool (Numbers 18:15, Deuteronomy 18:4); when the lambs were slaughtered they took the meat as well (Deuteronomy 18:3, Numbers 18:14), leaving the woman totally destitute.

None of this is historical, of course, since the

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settled agrarian way of life, not to mention the laws and observances under fire, most certainly did not exist in the era when the Israelite tribes were sojourning in the wilderness. Clearly, then, the sages themselves were the source of the objections to the Torah voiced by Korah. His complaints, as Richard Rubenstein suggests in *The Religious Imagination: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Jewish Theology* (1968), can be taken as projections by the sages of suppressed feelings of ambivalence toward the stringent *halakhic* code they were creating. Korah's position is also reminiscent of the views of such early exponents of Reform in the 19th century as Rabbi Aaron Chorin of Hungary; it strikes a familiar note as well to anyone who has followed the problematic course of Jewish law in the modern state of Israel in regard to marriage, divorce, bastardy, the sabbatical year, and similar matters, all areas in which punctilious observance, occasionally bolstered by egregious legal fictions or other artful dodges, seems at times to be the primary goal of rabbinic legists.

The issue involved, however, goes far beyond the question of letter versus spirit, ultimately coalescing as a problem pertaining to religious law that has never been resolved satisfactorily and perhaps cannot be. In American Jewish life today it is reflected in the Orthodox synagogue's refusal to countenance women and men sitting together at worship services. Orthodoxy commonly presents separate seating as a pentateuchal mandate, but though it is a practice of long standing, endorsed by many Torah luminaries both past and present, it is not mentioned in the Bible and is not included in any of the traditional enumerations of the 613 commandments binding on observant Jews. Despite this, as Alan J. Yuter elaborates in some detail in a recent essay in *Judaism* (Spring 1979), the question has been removed from the arena of interpretation and free discussion by loyalist deference to a small group of rabbinic authorities who are the doyens of Orthodox thought in this country.

COMING back to Korah, it can be seen that the question of authority was also the real issue throughout his midrashic debate with Moses, though not stated in so many words. By impugning even a few selected details of the law, Korah was challenging the very basis on which Moses presented the Torah to the people. Either it was from God, as Moses maintained, or it was not, in which case Moses was a false prophet. The claim that a body of law is of divine origin may be challenged from the outside, by atheists or Gentiles who do not accept the existence of the Deity said to have mandated the code. It may also be challenged from the inside, by one who shares the belief in the divinity but questions the received view of the divinity's actions. Korah's challenge was that of an insider, for he had been present at Sinai, and his acceptance of the Ten Commandments shows him willing, in principle, to believe that laws could be divinely inspired. He was motivated, then, either by animosity to Moses, as the sages insisted, or by a feeling that religion could or should be something other than unthinking obedience to an oft-times obscure or disagreeable code.

Since it was not possible to consult the putative Source of the Torah, Who according to Moses spoke to no one but Himself, Korah reasoned backward from the laws, contending that they could not be divine because they were so obviously ungodly. To those who believed Moses a prophet, however, the ungodliness existed only in the eye of the beholder. An anecdote recounted by Simon Greenberg in his essay, "Ethics, Religion, and Judaism" (*Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1972), puts the problem quite succinctly, though with a somewhat different emphasis. In 1926 Greenberg met a rabbi who had recently left the Soviet Union. The rabbi claimed to have questioned Leon Trotsky about some mass executions that had taken place under his authority. Trotsky, said the rabbi, held that what he had done was only what Joshua and the Israelites did when they conquered the land of Canaan. "And what did you say to that?" Greenberg asked. "What do you mean?" the rabbi replied. "Joshua was commanded by God to do what he did, but who commanded Trotsky?"

A Jewish question, it is said, is one in which the question is better than the answer. The quip certainly seems apt here. The Torah itself acknowledged the issue Korah raised but could not offer adequate guidelines. The problem is treated twice in the Book of Deuteronomy. One passage (18:22) states that the things a true prophet says in God's name will eventually come to pass, which may seem clear enough but makes it impossible to know whether he was a true prophet until after the fact, when it may be too late. The other passage (13:2) warns that false prophecies may also come to pass, so the criterion must be whether the prophet's teachings accord with what has already been given in the Torah, leaving a rather large area of uncertainty since the Torah is often not easily understood and, in addition, does not touch upon every contingency.

Several centuries after Deuteronomy the problem was still clouded, for we read in the book bearing his name that Jeremiah, himself a prophet and therefore presumably knowing something about the prophetic experience, went through an interval of doubt about his own mission when he met up with Hananiah ben Azzur, who also claimed to be a prophet but expounded completely different ideas (Jeremiah 28:1-17). The issue was more alive in Jeremiah's day than in our own, but it still has relevance, not simply because authority remains a problem in religious life, but because certain types of prophetic illumination are still considered possible in Judaism even though the kind of prophecy on which Scripture

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can be based is said in the Talmud (Yoma 9b) to have ceased with the deaths of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi in the 5th century B.C.E. Moreover, at least some Jews are still confronted with the awesome prospect that someday they may have to evaluate the credentials of a claimant to messianic status.

The problem delineated in Korah's debate with Moses is one that will always gnaw at Jewish religionists who are committed in some manner to a system in which a legalistic approach to conduct is intertwined with the other elements of belief in God. As noted, the sages, animated by the psychic process described by Rubenstein, were the ones who actually originated the debate and formulated Korah's stance in it, and they at least found an acceptable solution. The Bible, it will be recalled, said that the earth opened and swallowed Korah and his followers alive. In Tractate Baba Batra of the Talmud (fol. 74a), a Babylonian scholar named Rabbah b. Bar Huna, who died early in the 3rd century, tells how an Arab merchant, who guided him through Sinai, led him to the place where Korah was entombed. There, putting his ear to a crack in the surface of the ground, Rabbah b. Bar Huna heard voices crying, "Moses and his Torah are truth, and we are liars."

THE great upheaval known in the tradition as Korah's revolt was directed against Moses, but in the Torah's view, opposition to Moses and opposition to God were the same thing. In both the biblical and the midrashic versions, the Israelites led by Korah were trying to free themselves from the burdensome discipline that came with liberation and the giving of the law. A Bible-reading fisherman might well be reminded of his catch thrashing about in the net in a last desperate effort to elude his grasp, for this, in fact, is what the Israelites were doing. They had allowed themselves to be delivered from Egypt, one may imagine, less from love of God than from hatred of bondage, and once they realized that the Deity Who had adopted them had a yoke of His own to impose, they wanted in only on their own terms, not on His. Korah was the first in a long line of spokesmen for this attitude and his revolt, especially when conceived in the terms delineated in the Midrash, became the paradigmatic passage for a theme that crops up again and again in the Bible and recurs as a leitmotif throughout the long course of Jewish history.

A larger-than-life figure whose name has become a byword not for simple rebelliousness, but for outright rejection of the element that makes religion, in its Jewish variant, different from any of humankind's other enterprises and activities, the Korah of the tradition embodies doubts and reservations that inevitably surfaced in thoughtful minds but could not be expressed more positively without endangering the whole structure of Judaism. Animated by concerns that can be seen as humane and humanistic rather than malicious, he is depicted in the sources as a figure of unvarnished evil. Condemned because he tried to judge God by human standards and to evaluate God's demand by the same criteria he would have applied in other spheres, the midrashic Korah is 20th-century man in conflict with a primeval yet inescapable aspect of the religious sensibility—acceptance of the ineluctable gap between humankind and God, and obedience to those who claim that for them it has been narrowed somewhat.

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Kissinger and His Critics

Walter Laqueur

Success and failure in politics are seldom absolute categories; compared with his predecessors and his successors, Henry Kissinger acquitted himself well. In some respects he was lucky, for he had the support of a President who, whatever his other failings, had a flair for foreign policy and also greater experience and competence than most Presidents in recent decades. Kissinger's great incubus was Vietnam, which he inherited. Although he surely must have known in 1968 that the war could not be won, the fighting continued for another five years, and the question that inevitably arises, and which, if answered in the negative, forms the basis of an adverse judgment of Kissinger's whole tenure in government, is whether the price that had to be paid for a negotiated settlement was not excessive. Would the disaster, in Southeast Asia and at home, have been any greater following a unilateral American retreat in 1970? (Of course, as one English writer, Michael Howard, says: "One can but remark with some amazement on the amount of obloquy the American liberals have heaped on the man who eventually got them out of Vietnam compared with their sympathetic attitude toward those who got them in.")

This and other questions have arisen with fresh urgency upon the recent publication of Kissinger's memoirs. *White House Years** is a long book, but not too long considering that it covers four years of world history. It is also a very interesting book, especially where the author sustains his own interest in the subject on which he writes. And it is, finally, a very important book. Indeed, it is difficult to think of a book on international politics of comparable importance published during the last twenty years. Although Kissinger's critics have already found much to get indignant about, *White House Years* does impressively demonstrate once again that, almost alone among policy-makers of the recent past, Kissinger had an overall concept and a long-term political strategy. In the days to come, these qualities, always in short supply, may be grievously missed.

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Fifty years ago the State Department was very small. America had no enemies and few rivals. The Secretary of State could travel abroad if he was enterprising, but there was no need to do so; there were, in any case, only about five or six countries that mattered. The traffic of notes was limited and there was no intelligence service. Today there are some 150 sovereign states, America faces a great deal of ill will, problems have multiplied in every direction. Those conducting foreign policy are swamped by memoranda, notes, and position papers. The number employed in the foreign service at home and abroad has increased by leaps and bounds. This quantum jump may be a blessing for university graduates looking for work; whether it contributes to a more effective foreign policy is less certain.

No Secretary of State can possibly have more than a nodding acquaintance with all the problems facing him. Kissinger, for example, has been accused by his critics of being uninterested in economics, and this may well be true, for there is very little on economics in the present volume. But if a Secretary of State is well-versed in the problems of foreign trade and the balance of payments, it is unlikely that he will be equally interested in and knowledgeable about Europe and Latin America, Africa and Russia and China, technology and military strategy. And if he knows about all this, the chances are that he will have some other serious drawback.

To cope with the unending problems and the unwieldy apparatus there are now two Secretaries of State (*de facto* if not *de jure*)—the Secretary himself and the National Security Adviser, between whom the division of labor is ill-defined, to say the least. If the government were to call in a management expert, he would very likely recommend a division of the burden among three or four Secretaries of State, with perhaps a second President preoccupied solely with foreign affairs.

Such or similar reforms, however logical and necessary, and even if in the long run they may well be inevitable, are of course unlikely to be made in the near future. In the meantime, the present unsatisfactory situation will continue,

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with one Secretary of State in charge of an unwieldy apparatus incapable of undertaking major initiatives, and a National Security Adviser heading the ninety-nine or so aides who make up the National Security Council, a body which should be able to function at least in an emergency.

Kissinger's book stresses again and again that the conduct of foreign policy is impossible without, on the one hand, continuity, and on the other hand, a minimum of secrecy. Such wisdom was not unknown in the 18th and 19th centuries and earlier, but in our time, at least in the United States, there is no continuity and there is virtually no secrecy. Kissinger held office for eight years, a very long time by modern standards (he was National Security Adviser for four of them—the period covered by *White House Years*—and Secretary of State for the remaining four, which he will cover in the second volume of his memoirs). Andrei Gromyko, by contrast, has now been Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union for almost twenty-nine years, which compares favorably with Talleyrand, Palmerston, and even Bismarck. Gromyko has seen Dulles, Rusk, Rogers, and Kissinger come and go, and he will no doubt outlast Cyrus Vance. Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin has been in Washington longer than most Senators and Congressmen; his envoys have made themselves at home in the Congress, the State Department, the newspaper offices and research institutes of Washington. At the end of his stay in Moscow, the present American ambassador to the Soviet Union will just know his way along Gorky Street and may be able to make out the headlines in *Pravda*.

MUCH, perhaps most, of Kissinger's time in Washington was spent in various inter-office rivalries and in keeping his designs secret; while some of this was perhaps unnecessary or the need for it at least exaggerated, the reasons behind it were all too obvious. Every major country has to keep *some* secrets. The American attempt to have none, while admirable in intent, has been disastrous in its consequences. Leaks may act as a corrective to mistakes about to be committed, but they also act as a brake on all positive action, as at the present time when the main danger facing American foreign policy is an overall paralysis, barely veiled by surface diplomatic action, usually unconcerted and ineffective, and resounding declarations which fewer and fewer people take seriously.

The press figures prominently in Kissinger's book—both for the leaks of government information that appeared there and were given wide publicity, and for the editorial opinion that was frequently ranged against him in the later years of his tenure. The press in this context more often than not means editorials in the New York *Times*. These editorials in the period under review seldom represented the most knowledgeable or the most judicious views available, but the fact that they were the distilled collective wisdom of a great newspaper gave them a prestige which they might not otherwise have had. Like every foreign policymaker, Kissinger needed the media and so he paid inordinate attention to them.

The same could be said of the sensitivity he displayed and continues to display toward the views of his former friends in the official and unofficial foreign-policy establishment. He was (as he himself says) much pained by the break-up of old friendships and associations, but in retrospect the mental anguish he obviously still feels seems, at least in some cases, excessive. Kissinger writes:

> Where I parted company with my friends and former colleagues was in my analysis of Soviet motivations. I did not accept the proposition that unilateral restraint in weapons procurement on our part would invoke a comparable response from the Kremlin. As believers in the predominance of "objective factors" the Soviet leaders were likely to interpret such steps less as gestures of conciliation than as weakness, caused by domestic or economic pressures. The Soviet Union after the Cuban missile crisis was going all out in its weapons procurement in every major category of arms. American abdication would tempt Soviet tendencies toward filling every vacuum. . . . It was true that notions of military superiority had a different significance in the nuclear age; it did not follow that we could risk standing still while our adversaries built feverishly. Over the decades a growing imbalance against us was bound to deprive our pledges to defend our allies of any credibility. . . .

All this is so obvious that one wonders why, and for whom, it was necessary to spell it out. But of course until quite recently confusion reigned supreme in leading centers of American opinion, and even the banal truth that power still counts in relations among nations needed to be argued for and defended. The Ayatollah Khomeini and Afghanistan have infused some element of reality into the debate today, but the purveyors of the views against which Kissinger had to struggle are still very much around.

It is a strange phenomenon that in our time perhaps more than in any other, politicians and those advising them in foreign affairs have been able to be consistently wrong without damage to their careers and reputations. A surgeon who kills too many of his patients, an architect whose houses or bridges collapse, even a horse with a bad track record is soon replaced. But this law seemingly does not apply to those diplomats, columnists, and political scientists who only yesterday were arguing (for instance) that the rulers of Vietnam and Cambodia were humanitarians who had taken to the sword only because they had to resist foreign aggression; or who maintained that it was altogether unthinkable that the Soviet Union (let alone Cuba) would ever interfere in Africa, and no harm if they did; or who advised a radical cutback of America's conventional forces;

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or who announced that Eurocommunism was the wave of the future and that it was in the American interest to make an accommodation with it; or who called Khomeini both a saint and a liberal; or who predicted that Afghanistan would be Russia's Vietnam; or who assured us that the rise in oil prices over the last six years was not a matter of great consequence. People may go bankrupt in private life, but apparently not in politics.

When it comes to foreign policy, the rule seems to be that everyone has to have a hearing, for truth lies somewhere in the middle—between the sane man and the lunatic, between the knowledgeable and the ignoramus. In London a corner of Hyde Park has been set aside for political and religious sectarians, cranks, and eccentrics, where they may preach their respective gospels to small or large crowds of the curious. In the United States the media have taken over this function, presumably in the name of democratic principles and, of course, their duty to the public. The spectacle has all the ingredients of high comedy, except that the issue at stake is the survival of the country.

White House Years has attracted a great deal of criticism, most of it predictable. The book was bound to provoke the ire of those still protesting the Vietnam war and unwilling to accept that it is over. For them the Vietnam era must never end, and everything else follows from this tenet. It was Kissinger, they say, who prolonged the conflict, who lied even more than Kennedy and Johnson or even Nixon, and who was responsible for all the death and devastation. History for these people has stood still; if there have been unpleasant developments in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, they must stem from America's actions during the war. As for other international problems, they can be solved by applying the lessons of Vietnam, namely, noninterference in the affairs of other countries except through economic help and support for the legitimate national aspirations of radical movements. There is a psychoanalytic term—parataxic distortion—for this condition, in which the shock of a certain experience is so great that all subsequent experiences are interpreted in its light.

There have been defections from this camp, albeit reluctant and half-hearted ones. The reviews of *White House Years* by Barbara W. Tuchman in the New York *Times Book Review* and by Stanley Hoffmann in the *New York Review of Books* are cases in point. Neither reviewer likes Kissinger's frequent invocation of the idea of a "geopolitical" approach to foreign policy. For Mrs. Tuchman, "geopolitics" is just another word for "cold war," and Professor Hoffmann also names Kissinger as the "complete cold warrior." (Have his role as architect of détente and his speeches about a new structure of peace been so quickly forgotten?) Yet Mrs. Tuchman says that "the contest with Communism is indeed serious," and she believes with Stanley Hoffmann that "the problem is not whether Soviet designs should be thwarted, the debate is over how to do it." In other words, Kissinger, with his large ideas, is too clumsy; the contest needs to be conducted by more discriminating types, like, presumably, Mrs. Tuchman and Professor Hoffmann.

The names of Barbara Tuchman and Stanley Hoffmann have been mentioned in the past as foreign-policy advisers; the author of *The Proud Tower*, was, I believe, Eugene McCarthy's candidate for Secretary of State. How would they have dealt with the problems confronting America? Their prescriptions are almost identical. Mrs. Tuchman believes that the contest with Communism should be conducted "in local terms." This is sensible but unstartling advice; few sane people would apply the experience of Patagonia to Finland. What else? "If we had paid more attention to the history of Vietnamese nationalism or to the internal stresses in Iran, we could not (one hopes) have invested our policy and support in regimes lacking a valid mandate from their own people." But how does one obtain a valid mandate? Mrs. Tuchman, a student of 20th-century history, knows that Hitler and Mussolini had such a mandate from their people—and so did Emperor Wilhelm II in 1914 when he got his war credits. In the Third World, where most regimes have not been elected, a valid mandate simply means effective control of a country. It follows in practical terms that the United States should support the more repressive regimes, fascist or Communist or both, because these are more effectively in control, having ruthlessly stamped out all opposition. This is indeed a possible line of action, although its moral superiority to the course of supporting old-fashioned authoritarian governments is not readily apparent—and there is nothing particularly liberal about it.

Professor Hoffmann reaches the same conclusion, following a more circuitous route. Kissinger's design, Hoffmann says, is not compatible with the U.S. system of government, first because it requires an extraordinary capacity for acting swiftly and flexibly all over the globe, and second because this capacity depends in turn on the "permission" of the electorate so that America's leaders can pursue their delicate game abroad without constraints and pressures. But this is much exaggerated. The problem for the U.S. is not its ability to act swiftly and flexibly all over the globe but its ability to react sometime, somewhere. Nor is it necessary to an effective foreign policy that there be *no* domestic constraints and pressures, only that these constraints and pressures not become so great as to cause paralysis.

But for Hoffmann, the problem with Kissinger is not only that his approach cannot work but that his basic design is wrong anyway. It rests on a false or unreal view of the world, in which the struggle between Washington and Moscow "ab-

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sorbs every other conflict or issue," in which the Soviets are made responsible for whatever happens, and in which every test, everywhere, has to be met. But this is no more than a caricature. Kissinger can hardly be accused of having tried to meet *every* test. Nor has he (or anyone else) blamed the Soviet Union for the oil policy of the OPEC states, to take but one example.

Let us state a contrary proposition: that one cannot *escape* every confrontation. If that is so, where would Professor Hoffmann and Mrs. Tuchman draw the line? Clearly not in Asia, Africa, or the Middle East. Certainly not in the Caribbean, for this would bring the U.S. into confrontation with Cuba, which they would surely regard as most undesirable. Even Canada would be a case of "local circumstances." How should one have faced the Iranian crisis? Easy, says Hoffmann: "Isolate the Ayatollah." One can just see the nations of the world volunteering for this task, with the Soviet Union in the front rank!

A third attack on Kissinger, by McGeorge Bundy in *Foreign Affairs*, deals with a single paragraph in *White House Years* (out of 1,500 closely printed pages!) concerning the private assurances given to President Thieu to secure his acceptance of Washington's agreement with Hanoi. In his review, Bundy tries to show that Kissinger's explanations were far from straightforward. What does this prove? One finds it difficult to believe that Bundy is as innocent as he pretends to be of the uses of deliberately imprecise language in politics. The fact is that, like George Ball and other members of the older foreign-policy establishment, he does not like Henry Kissinger. One day Kissinger's biographer will have the unenviable task of sorting out the personal motives from the substantive differences in all the attacks on him. (Certainly some of his critics saw themselves as rivals for his job, which did not dispose them to think well of his performance.)

MRS. Tuchman concludes her review of *White House Years* with her own credo on the conduct of foreign affairs:

> . . . that a foreign policy that alienates one's countrymen and causes dislike and distrust of government is not worth what it might gain against the adversary; that a nation's strength lies ultimately in its self-esteem and confidence in what is right; and that whatever damages these damages the nation.

She has Vietnam in mind, but the publication of her review coincided with the crisis in Iran, and in the light of that crisis her ringing words about self-esteem and confidence in what is right take on a different aspect.

The Iranian crisis did not come as a surprise to those who have watched, with sadness and concern, the steep decline in recent years of American influence all over the world. There had been many warning signs, the most recent in the speeches and resolutions at the Havana conference of the "nonaligned" countries last fall. America in the postwar period had been admired and feared, loved and hated, suspected and sometimes emulated; but never until now has it been considered a laughing-stock and an irrelevance in world affairs.

The long-term local implications of the confrontation with Khomeini and his minions should not be exaggerated. The noise and fury may subside in Iran as quickly as they erupted. There may be political realignments difficult to visualize at present. The real importance of the Teheran crisis is to have highlighted the present status of the United States in the world.

For this one may have cause eventually to be grateful to Khomeini. He did away in a flash with many cherished delusions which otherwise might have persisted for a long time. Perhaps the chief such delusion was that America's political and military strength was second to none; as Khomeini said in one of his speeches, Carter is beating an empty drum. Curiously, the advocates of the military-power-does-not-count school claimed that the Teheran events were a striking confirmation of their thesis, for here was a crowd of students defying America despite its unparalleled military might. The moral would have been more convincing if similar mishaps had befallen, say, East Germany, or Cuba, or the Soviet Union. But they have not: Khomeini and his henchmen are not suicidal; they knew whom they could attack with impunity. From this point of view it is East Germany and Cuba that are great powers, not the United States. Their embassies will not be taken over, they can push through resolutions at the UN and other international gatherings, they can dispatch troops to any part of Africa or the Middle East, they can provide political asylum—the U.S. cannot.

It is true that the nuclear arsenal will not be enough to get the United States through the storms of the 1980's. What is needed above all is the capability to hold its own against a variety of adversaries in a variety of circumstances. This does not necessarily refer to military means, though without a military capability other actions will hardly be convincing. It does mean the ability whenever necessary to conduct political warfare such as is waged by all other nations with interests outside their borders: effective radio propaganda, for instance, instead of the present derisory efforts, and the capacity to engage in covert action without informing seven congressional committees, 150 members of Congress, and their staffs. Suggestions like this would have been rejected even six months ago; now they will be given a hearing as the conviction takes hold that the U.S. is not exactly surrounded by friends and well-wishers.

All this may be painful to accept, but unless it is accepted, the decline of the U.S will turn into a collapse. Advice has been offered to the effect that

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one should not be guided by anger and that exercises of *machismo* are uncalled for and are a danger to world peace. This is true as far as it goes, but it ignores the central issue, namely, that the assertion of American power is needed not to give vent to frustration and aggression, nor even to restore American prestige, but precisely to remove the danger of war. For it should be perfectly obvious that if the present trend continues, America will sooner or later be faced with threats or demands which even a Kennedy, even a McGovern, would not be able to accept.

For a long time now America has been playing according to one set of rules while its adversaries have played according to another, involving considerably fewer inhibitions and restrictions. Khomeini's "students" have only practiced in a blatant way what others were doing more cautiously and insidiously (and therefore more dangerously). Khomeini has thus compelled Americans to rethink the rules of the game. How are we to survive if we remain incapable of reacting to political warfare, unable to defend vital interests?

Any American President will therefore have to follow a markedly tougher line in the future, not in order to play to the chauvinist galleries but simply in response to the new international climate. Allowing oneself to be pushed around incessantly is not in the American grain. When Henry Kissinger said this in a speech in Austin, Texas, he was berated by Tom Wicker and likeminded editorialists for being inflammatory and irresponsible. One can understand why: Kissinger must be blamed and discredited if their point of view is to be justified. Yet however deeply the next President may be convinced that power is unimportant in the contemporary world, he will have to accept the fact that détente between West and East, between North and South, cannot possibly replace the balance of power. And any President will also have to accept the fact that America faces a struggle for survival which cannot be won by sending food to Cambodia, by zero economic growth, by wringing our hands, or by proclaiming that we are everyone's friends.

STILL, the learning process is only at the beginning. Even now it is argued that the U.S., unable to put its own house in order, has no right to preoccupy itself with the affairs of other countries. If the Cubans wish to install Russian bases on their territory, what business does America have complaining? Some now maintain that the central issue in world affairs today is frustrated nationalism, and that American foreign policy will succeed only as it identifies itself with the forces of "radical nationalism"—from Castro to Qaddafi. Some argue that the Soviet Union, surrounded by enemies, has more reason to worry than does the United States. Some, including a number who were directly responsible for the disastrous involvement in Vietnam, now claim that the U.S. will always behave irresponsibly if it is too strong, and must therefore be kept in a state of weakness.

The obfuscators will be fighting some mighty rearguard actions in the months to come. Some will tell us that despite Iran there is nothing wrong with America's standing in the world. Others will admit that there is something wrong, but will attribute it in part to our own aggressive and provocative actions in the past and in part to "objective" changes in world politics. Still others will appeal to instincts of cowardice and convenience. Defeatism has not only injured American self-esteem, not only affected our ability to do what is right, but it has also rendered some people incapable of seeing the difference between right and wrong. The old foreign-policy establishment, weighed down with guilt, cannot provide the lead, nor, certainly, can the advocates of the "New Politics" of the early 70's, who bear their own share of responsibility for the present mess. Many of these people (who now call themselves the "moderate Center") were, no doubt, genuinely convinced that they could restore peace to America and the world. But intentions count for little in world politics. Their misguided actions have led to a dangerous situation in which America may either have to accept, quite soon, a policy of surrender to massive, ongoing blackmail or prepare itself for armed conflict.

We are now paying the price for, on the one hand, a sustained lack of resolution, and on the other, an inability even to understand the nature of the threats facing America. Whatever may be said in criticism of the policies described and defended by Henry Kissinger in *White House Years*, the book itself does contribute to such an understanding, and in this alone—not to mention its many other distinctions—lies Kissinger's superiority to most of his critics.

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Inside Jewish History

Chaim Raphael

Oh, for a slim, elegant little book about the Jews. This *cri de coeur* is not a general complaint about the huge volumes that publishers continue to offer us and to which, as it happens, I am rather addicted. Nor is it meant to suggest that the vast content of Jewish history can be dealt with briefly—while standing on one foot, as the old dictum puts it. Still less does it imply that the books of encyclopedic range which have been recently appearing are not in themselves scholarly or interesting. Indeed, it is precisely because the presentation of factual material and pictorial illustration has now reached such a high standard in successive books that one feels the need for a book taking the historical picture as a datum and guiding us on its interpretation.

Is Jewish history too complex for a set of ideas about it to surface in this way? Perhaps; but there are glimpses of what might be possible in, ironically, the latest of the large comprehensive books, *The Jewish World: History and Culture of the Jewish People*, which consists of eighteen separate essays by specialists in their respective fields, under the editorship of a scholar of the utmost distinction, Elie Kedourie.* Though he himself contributes only a brief introduction, perhaps it is through his influence that one is alerted, in plowing through the densely packed pages, to many stimulating ideas, only partially developed here but very beguiling as a starting point for a quiet consideration of the issues inherent in the Jewish experience.

Kedourie leads us along this path by asking us to consider not just the mystery of Jewish survival but the intensity of feeling that made this survival possible. He sees an abiding symbol of it in the Western Wall, not a ruin of "dead and inert stone" but a fragment of the past "instinct with devotion." In sharp contrast to the view of the Jews as "objects" acted on by others, he notes the positive character of their life. If they outlived all the great empires of the ancient world and resisted annihilation while scattered among subsequent civilizations, it was because of "the social arrangements they devised for the preservation of their group and the carrying on of their tradition." An understanding of Jewish history has to "follow its own autonomous movement and be faithful to its own self-shaping spirit."

To stress the autonomous, self-shaping spirit of the Jews is in no way to open oneself to the criticism mounted in these pages by Robert Alter of those who impute an unchanging rigidity behind all Jewish experience, projecting "a monolithic Hebrew mind that dominates the actions of Jews from Leviticus to the Likud."† Kedourie would certainly accept Alter's view that Jewish history is full of adaptability and compromise; yet within this he suggests a number of constant themes, all of which have left their mark on Jewish consciousness.

One of these is that in the Jewish religion, "exile seems to figure as a leading motif." It begins with Abraham, and is repeated with even greater moment in the Exodus. In both cases there is a covenant with God, with the penalty clause that a breach of this covenant will lead to the Jews being "scattered from one end of the world to the other." This consciousness justifies the title of Chaim Potok's latest book, *Wanderings*, but only partially; for if one is trying, with Kedourie, to accentuate the positive, the obverse of the coin—*Settlings*—becomes equally if not more pregnant with meaning.**

In every case, one begins, when looking for themes, with something very simple and obvious which turns out to have rich significance as one explores it. This is certainly true of another lasting theme, identified by Kedourie as "the mistrust of political authority." We are very familiar with this idea in the Bible. Rulers are fallible and capricious; only the Divine Order gives meaning and coherence to human life. But the significance of the theme does not stop there. As Kedourie sees it, the essence of this idea is the challenge to reason and the individual conscience projected by the Torah if accepted as a continuum in its written and oral forms; for though the Torah seems—and is—God-oriented, it can be viewed with equal relevance as stressing the role of man himself in determining his fate.

At the center of this view is the unique role in Jewish life of the teacher (the rabbi) in *interpreting* the Torah. One thinks of the rabbi at first as an authority on something fixed in the past and immutable for all time; but the vast rabbinic literature is a testimony to a more creative activity. The rabbi, throughout the centuries, is the projector of a constantly developing attitude to life in which the determining factor is man's supreme Godlike gift—his reasoning power. Kedourie examines the "intellectual poise and self-confidence" of

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* Abrams, 328 pp., 436 illustrations, $35.00.

†"A New Theory of Kashrut," Commentary, August 1979.

** See the review by Erich Isaac, Commentary, April 1979.

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this approach, which recurs in various forms (as we shall see) as an axis of Jewish thought.

Another theme calling for explication is the role throughout Jewish history of communal organizations, which tended to be looked down on in the post-Enlightenment atmosphere but are now beginning to be seen (through the work of Salo Baron and others) as far more important to Jewish experience than was realized. Side by side with the idea (not wrong in itself) that Jews have inevitably tended to take on the patina of their surroundings, Kedourie asks us in a few brief sentences to give weight to the creative character of these organizations, expressed in self-defense and self-government, which made them "recognizably similar, however distant they were from one another in time and space." The links among them established "social, mercantile, and scholarly networks" which were a paradigm for the expression of kinship long after the granting of civil rights removed what had seemed their dominating *raison d'être* (as Jacob Katz has shown in his penetrating book, *Out of the Ghetto*).

IDEAS of this importance are thrown up in any formal account of Jewish history, but not always given room for full expression. In *The Jewish World,* for example, the excellent long essay by Hyam Maccoby on the contents and character of the Bible turns at one point to a brief exposition of the role of the Law in Jewish life, asking us to view it not as a set of rules demanding blind obedience but as a living, beneficent force. Like others, Maccoby seems motivated in developing this point by the need to counter the view, emerging from the Gospels and still dominant, that the Pharisees, who gave the Law preeminence in the days of Jesus, were petifogging hypocrites—"whited sepulchres which appear beautiful outward but are within full of dead men's bones." For Maccoby, the Law enshrines precisely those virtues which the Gospel writers ascribed to Jesus. Obedience to the Law, as set out in Jewish tradition, is not the opposite of a life governed by brotherly love, but the path through which such love is realized:

> The object of law is to consider all human situations with a view to discovering what constitutes loving behavior in all possible circumstances. Law is thus a science of behavior, the lasting principles of which may be found in the Bible, but which requires constant development in new times and circumstances.

To some Jews this might seem a reductionist view. The Law is for them the word of God as communicated on Mount Sinai to Moses, and needs no pragmatic justification. And here one recognizes the presence of the two forces—reason and faith—that move powerfully through Jewish experience, not as exclusive alternatives but as two complementary ways of coming to terms with the influence of the Jewish inheritance. One way of expressing it, as suggested earlier, is the tussle in Jewish life—never fully resolved—between a worship of God that is expressed in subservience, and an identification with God that demands self-confidence. These differing attitudes have surfaced in various forms, one of them centering on the role that Jews have given to mysticism. It is a subject which has been expounded with marvelous historical power in the writings of Gershom Scholem, but it still needs to be brought down to earth, if the paradox is permissible, for general understanding. There are valuable hints at what might emerge in an absorbing essay in *The Jewish World* by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky.

All religion has a mystical aspect, and we have learned from Scholem how widely spread this was among Jews. What has to be determined is how Jews married their surrender to mystical ideas with what has always seemed their equally strong addiction to humanism and the processes of reason. Maccoby, in his chapter on the Bible, attempts to resolve this issue with a concept he refers to as "normal mysticism." Judaism, he says, "is not an otherworldly religion." Its emphasis is on human welfare. If every command in the Bible is "consecrated by God's approval" and thereby acquires "cosmic significance," its aim is still "the shaping of the truly human life": "There need be no straining, therefore, for extra-human experience or for union with the Divine in the type of self-surrender or self-annihilation common in non-Jewish forms of mysticism."

No one who has read Scholem can believe this to be historically true for all of Jewish experience, even if it reflects a strong strand in what one might call Jewish populist instinct. Werblowsky, a devoted disciple of Scholem, offers a different resolution of the conflict. At one point in his long presentation of the story he does state bluntly that "mystical union in its extreme, classic form is totally excluded from rabbinic Judaism"; but this merely clears the decks for an examination of the various ways in which Jews found their own approaches to the concept of union with God. We discover, with no surprise, that there is room in Jewish thought for everything.

For 12th-century Maimonides, seeing faith built on reason, it is "man's rational faculty," his capacity to unite himself to the "active intellect" emanating from God, that leads him to a form of loving communion—*amor intellectualis dei*. An earlier poet and philosopher, Judah ha-Levi, had taken a very different view, starting with an intensely personal love of God which alone, it seemed to him, offered a means of coming to terms with the anguish and hope of Jewish experience. His near-contemporary, Bahya ibn Pakuda, sought union with God in yet another way —through an almost total quietist faith in which man sees and accepts the emptiness of material satisfactions and thus prepares his soul for an intimate relation to the supernatural. It is significant, Werblowsky says, that Bahya's book, *The Duties of the Heart,* "was one of the most frequently copied, printed, and reprinted manuals of the spiritual life."

IT IS a paradox that these attempts by Jews to penetrate the mysteries of the supernatural became a factor, as time went on, in the creation of a movement which had the most practical and earthly of all

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aims—the rebuilding of a homeland in the land of Israel. Any book on Jewish ideas has to establish this bridge, which is not only fascinating historically but leads us into what is arguably the most perplexing theme in Jewish life today.

At one end of the bridge, deep in the world of medieval Jewish mysticism, we are aware of mysterious, half-magical, secret teachings, particularly among rabbis in Spain and Provence in the 12th to 15th centuries, which built up ultimately to an elaborate set of esoteric doctrines about God and the Jews known as the Kabbalah. Though the number of Jews involved was essentially tiny, the doctrines became widespread among the initiated. The few accounts which have survived of the early kabbalists give us glimpses of the high emotional states of the participants, who could sometimes feel the light of the Divine Presence flowing around them. In doctrinal terms they were attempting (as Werblowsky puts it) a reconciliation of the abstract "rational" God of philosophy—the indefinable Infinite (*en sof*)—with "the manifest, self-revealing, accessible God of religious experience." In its later development in 16th-century Safed by Isaac Luria, the Kabbalah grew into a cosmic mythology describing the collapse, at the Creation, of the whole universe, and the methods by which it would all be restored to pristine perfection.

In itself, this might seem remote from daily life; but at the other end of the bridge we are confronted with the emergence at this time of an astonishing growth among Jews living in the countries around the Mediterranean of new forms of messianism, with an emphasis on redemption in the Holy Land. There had been a sea-change in popular thought; and the event which produced this—as dramatic in its time as the Holocaust today—was the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. The profound shock to Jewish consciousness caused by this catastrophe had a peculiar by-product in bringing to the fore ideas of popular moment latent in the mysteries of the Kabbalah and now seized on by the masses.

With the expulsion from Spain, Scholem says in his magisterial article on Kabbalah in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, messianism, linked to Israel, become part of the very core of Kabbalah:

> The earlier generations centered their thoughts on the return of man to the wellspring of his life, . . . through mystic communion. . . . Now it became combined with messianic and apocalyptic trends which laid greater stress on man's journey toward redemption than on his contemplated future return to the source of all existence in God.

With this change in emphasis, the kabbalists extended their influence through the whole Jewish community. If Kabbalah remained profound and complicated, "its aims lent themselves readily to popularization." The most dramatic effect was seen when an obscure and psychologically unstable kabbalist from Smyrna called Sabbatai Zevi proclaimed himself Messiah in 1664 and found the Jewish masses ready to follow him.

WITH hindsight, we are able to see in the Sabbatai Zevi story two factors that are decisive today, three hundred years later, in the thought we give to the existence of the state of Israel. The first is the way this strange adventure gave a public demonstration, for the first time since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., of the extraordinary strength among Jews of the messianic idea of redemption in Zion, expressed until then in memory and prayers, but from this time on an active, practical element in Jewish consciousness. The second is the way it demonstrated the latent power among Jews to unite universally in working for a cause felt to be central to their existence.

On the first, it is perhaps a surprise to claim the mid-17th century as the watershed of the Zionist idea in its practical form. Every history of Zionism lists factors operative much later—the growth of liberalism and nationalism in Europe, the emergence of Jewish leaders groomed in various ways by the Enlightenment, the oppression in Eastern Europe, the development of rich and relatively free communities in other parts of the world. But behind all this, the uniquely powerful element in Jewish life that made it possible for the later factors to work was the hold on the Jewish mind of redemption in Zion. It had been taken for the first time out of the prayerbook and turned, if only for the moment, into something that felt like reality. It is a striking fact that even after Sabbatai Zevi himself had collapsed in conversion and disgrace, many of his followers continued to believe in the redemption he had stood for, which testifies, as Scholem says, "to the way it had become rooted in the national consciousness."

As for the spontaneous unity in Jewish action, also demonstrated for the first time with Sabbatai Zevi, we are so used to it today as to take it for granted, yet it is a phenomenon whose implications for the state of Israel have still not been worked out fully. There is, in fact, a powerful and somewhat disconcerting discussion of this issue in the last essay in *The Jewish World*, by David Vital.

Most of the essay is factual, telling the story of the creation of the state; but in pinpointing the crucial role played by Zionist ideology, which saw a homeland as "the end of exile"—the solution of the Diaspora problem—Vital (a professor of political science at Tel Aviv University) turns to what he sees as "the central issue in contemporary Jewish life": the problem of the relationship between the Jews of the Diaspora and the Jews of the Jewish state.

All must accept as a fact the enormously close involvement of the two. And given the unending battle for survival of the state, surrounded by enemies, Vital asserts too that in this battle "Israel fights not only for itself, but for and with the Jewish people as a whole." In this situation he makes two proposals. First, he asks whether it is not "legitimate to demand of the Israeli government that it should make and formulate its policy not only in the light of the interests and needs of the Jewish state, but in the light of the interests and needs of the Jewish communities outside it." This would call for

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"the leaders of Diaspora Jewry—if they can be identified—to participate actively in the Israeli decision-making process."

He sees this as difficult enough; but he goes further in suggesting its counterpart—that the unity of Jewish interests, demonstrated by the involvement with Israel, must surely lead in due course to a direct influence by Israel in wholly new ways on the religious and social ideas of Jews in the Diaspora. The prospect is a long time off; but if Israel succeeds in establishing viable forms for "an authentic and autonomous Jewish society," the effect on the structure and ethos of Jewry as a whole "must, in the end, be substantial."

It may be, he thinks, that the trend toward Orthodoxy which he discerns in Israel will, on the whole, suit religious practice in the Diaspora. He is less sure that Diaspora Jews will find it easy to give up the "fundamental ethical and political ideas [that] are derived, in the first instance, from secular and non-Jewish sources"; yet the Zionist ideology which created the state demands it.

This, anyhow, is how the full working-out of the Jewish involvement with Israel looks from Tel Aviv. Needless to say, not everybody will agree; but Vital's essay certainly raises sharp questions of political and ideological identification that need to be thoroughly argued and clarified. All these ideas, and many others, will have to go into the slim volume on the Jews that I would like someone to write for us.

Fiction

Mailer: Settling for Less

Pearl K. Bell

For some twenty years now, Norman Mailer has been promising the world a big fat novel about "the mysteries of murder, suicide, incest, orgy, orgasm, and Time." *The Executioner's Song,** though it deals with four of the mysteries and is by far the fattest book he has written, is not it. In reconstructing the last nine months in the life of Gary Gilmore—the thirty-six-year-old Utah murderer who three years ago refused to appeal the death sentence and insisted on his right to be executed—Mailer has tried to combine two different modes in one. His account of an actual crime and its punishment, he assures us in the afterword, "does its best to be factual," yet in calling it a "true-life novel" he is also claiming that the book has been informed and dramatically shaped by the writer's imagination. But special labels for seemingly unclassifiable books are one thing, and reconciling the separate demands of truth and fiction is quite another thing.

Truman Capote, faced with the similar problem of defining *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences,* announced that he had invented a new literary form, the "non-fiction novel." Whatever this hyperbole may mean, it was the eye of Capote the novelist that spotted the literary promise in a gruesome murder case that had received little publicity outside of Kansas. During the years he worked on the book, Capote came to know the condemned killers, Perry Smith and Dick Hickock, like a friend and brother. Not only is Capote's responsive presence vividly felt throughout *In Cold Blood,* but he did not hesitate to make up conversations, attribute thoughts and feelings to his real characters which they could not have confided to him, and impose theatrical and metaphoric intensity on the bare facts —all in the untrammeled spirit of inventive fiction. Mailer never met Gary Gilmore, who became as famous as a movie star during his brief flare of iniquitous glory, and he agreed to write the book months after Gilmore was executed, when a great deal of the research had already been accumulated by others. The prose of *The Executioner's Song,* which Mailer pounded out in fifteen breakneck months, makes it clear that he has taken far less liberty with the record than Capote did. Paradoxically, Capote devised an explicit title for his embroidered narrative, while Mailer, journalistic to a fault, chose an obscurely figurative title (already used for a poem in his *Cannibals and Christians,* in 1966) that is more sound than sense. Overall, one is left with the impression that Mailer never completely overcame a fatal ambivalence about both the material and the method of *The Executioner's Song.*

The flat, impersonal style of *The Executioner's Song* is so radically unlike that of Mailer's novels, essays, and previous journalism—which are generally marked by self-exposure

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and self-assertion—that one reads it in bewilderment. The language displays almost none of Mailer's characteristic "fireworks of virtuosity" (his phrase), and there is no sign of the brilliantly intrusive commentator who dominates his journalism whether he is writing about astronauts, a protest march on the Pentagon, or women's lib. In dealing with Gilmore, Mailer resists the urge to be the *enfant terrible* of the literary world or the theoretician of the demonic instructing us in the "existential" significance of Gary Gilmore's wretched history. Instead, we listen to the often semi-literate and banal "true-life" voices of everyone whose life touched Gilmore's, however briefly, during those fateful nine months—his girlfriend and mother, the Utah relatives who offered him a chance at a normal existence, the prison guards and lawyers, and, stampeding through the second half of the book, the ratpack of journalists and hustlers lusting after every penny the drama might yield—as recorded endlessly in the many hours of taped interviews on which Mailer based the narrative.

Mailer has made no secret of the fact that he took on the Gilmore job for the money—a quarter of a million dollars before he wrote a word—but, considering his fascination with psychopathic personality and murder as the rebel's violent tactic for shocking bourgeois liberals out of their complacency, the subject itself must have been seductive. In "The White Negro," written in 1957, Mailer proposed the sensational idea that murder is the affirmation of existential courage, and the psychopath who enacts his violent impulses is the one genuinely free individual, bound by nothing but "the rebellious imperatives of the self." One would have expected Mailer the quondam existentialist, in taking on the story of a murder, to make an audacious effort to apotheosize Gilmore's crimes as acts of heroic defiance. But Mailer has done nothing of the kind. He imposes no hip abstractions on Gilmore's sordid history and deranged soul, neither of which could have sustained such a complicated intellectual burden. As the horrors of Gilmore's life pile up, it is impossible to draw any rational conclusion whatsoever about the doomed nature of this man, or even begin to guess what might have been done to alter his record of delinquency.

Without elaboration, the voices on the tapes, bearing unconscious and unliterary witness to the shabby underside of Mormon Utah, relate Gilmore's story at a bleak and listless pace: "The poker games continued. Different people. By the third night, Sterling got Rikki aside and asked if he would take Gary somewhere. The guy was really getting on everybody's nerves. So Rikki asked if he wanted to chase down some girls. Gary said *Yeah.*" But now and then the artless recollections provide a sense of the naive, generous, hopeful people who tried so hard to absorb Gilmore into the uneventful ordinariness of their working-class lives, and did not realize until it was too late that he could never fit in anywhere.

THERE were four Gilmore sons, born to a Mormon mother and a Catholic father who claimed he was an illegitimate son of Harry Houdini. (This would make Gary Gilmore one-quarter Jewish—a bemusing detail.) His mother said that from the time Gary was three years old, she knew he was going to be executed. When he came to Provo on parole from an Illinois penitentiary, sponsored by relatives who had not seen him in years, he had already spent more than half of his life in prison, beginning with reform school when he was thirteen. He was pathetically unable to cope with the minor necessities of freedom, like buying a pair of Levi's at J. C. Penney, and dangerously ill-equipped to handle more pressing matters like the ups and down of a love affair. Highly intelligent and articulate, he went berserk at the slightest frustration.

Gilmore was at once pitiable and vicious, but his girlfriend, Nicole Baker, was pure feckless pathos. She was only nineteen when she met him shortly after he got to Provo, but she had already been twice divorced (married for the first time at fourteen) and had two small children. She honestly could not remember how many men she had slept with, from the time she was eleven. Submissive and docile, she drifted through her days, too dumb to be wary. When Gary asked her to commit suicide—he believed they were star-crossed lovers "scheduled to meet on the other side"—she did not need much persuading. A patsy for the trashiest kind of pop sentimentality about love and death, she saw herself as a tragic heroine after Gary was locked up, conveniently forgetting that she had moved out on him before the murders because she was scared by his "aura of evil."

When he could not find her, Gilmore shot two young men to death on successive nights while robbing a gas station and a motel. They had not resisted handing over the money ($250), and the murders seem to have been an afterthought. Yet the psychiatrists called in by the state of Utah pronounced Gilmore sane and competent to stand trial. One of them later admitted that "the best-kept secret in psychiatric circles was that nobody understood psychopaths, and few had any notion of psychotics."

SURPRISINGLY, even this provocative confession does not draw Mailer into the ring, though the difference between psychopaths and psychotics was crucial to his argument in "The White Negro." What becomes clear at this point is that Mailer's book belongs not to Gary Gilmore but to the marketing of Gary Gilmore. The second half of *The Executioner's Song*, in which the hounds of ballyhoo descend on Utah and turn Gilmore into a worldwide celebrity, is called "Eastern Voices," to mark off the incongruent worlds that converged at the gallows for the first execution in ten years: the slick power-mongers of the media and the "Western Voices" of Utah that fill Part I. Norman Mailer understands better than most, given his obsession with celebrity and power, the journalists and self-promoters who exploited Gilmore and everyone connected with him in the hysterical weeks before his execution. The clamoring voices now heard on the tapes, as Mailer synchronizes their machinations, reveal a species of cupidity

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and greed that inflames his imagination as the simple folk of Utah could never do.

First came an amateur, Dennis Boaz, a spacey lawyer who was "into" Sufi and meditation. He did not last long once the pros came on the scene, but as Gilmore's putative lawyer he was allowed to have long and intimate conversations with the prisoner which ended up in the London *Daily Express*. A master of psychobabble, Boaz told a Los Angeles reporter that Gary "believes in karma . . . and that the manner in which he dies can be a learning experience for others." Then David Susskind sniffed a good thing, and sent a screenwriter to look into the movie potentiality in "the choreography of the crimes," only to find that a foxy hustler named Lawrence Schiller had already wormed his way into Gilmore's confidence, and sweet-talked the family into letting him have "exclusive rights" to any entertainments the story might eventually bring about.

In Schiller, Mailer has an ideally acquiescent operator willing to tell anyone his basest thoughts and schemes: an operator so calculating and full of moral hypocrisy that he dominates "Eastern Voices" like a garrulous ogre. A former *Life* photographer (his pictures of Marilyn Monroe were published with a text by Mailer), he had amassed a small fortune syndicating the stories of Susan Atkins of the Manson family, Marina Oswald and Jack Ruby, Madame Nhu and Lenny Bruce's widow. His trafficking in dead souls had earned this Chichikov-with-a-Sony the sobriquet "carrion bird." The occasional prick of conscience he suffers somehow makes Schiller all the more despicable, since he lies to himself as glibly as he does to others.

One can see now why Mailer wrote the book so impersonally, putting a safe distance between himself and the carrion bird. It was Schiller, brandishing his "exclusive rights," who got Mailer to do the book, and the two of them are splitting the profits. Without Schiller's relentless "in-depth" interrogation of Gilmore and Nicole and all the others, ostensibly for a *Playboy* interview, there would have been no book. After a while the incessant questions turned Gilmore into an obedient media machine, coming up with all the right answers for *Playboy*, and eventually for Mailer. What turned you into a killer? Schiller asks for the hundredth time, and at last Gilmore, no fool, relents, knowing what is expected of him: "I was always capable of murder. . . . There's a side of me that I don't like. I can become totally devoid of feelings for others, unemotional." He sounds like a writer—as though he were talking about someone else. Though Mailer has tried to remove himself completely from the obscene media carnival, his deadpan manner does not manage to conceal the way his material was gathered.

One problem that must have troubled Mailer in writing *The Executioner's Song*—in turning, as it were, from personal to group journalism—is how to hold the reader's interest in this unmusical chorus of voices drawn out to such unmediated length. Some of the time, of course, the events themselves are intrinsically so dramatic that they require no heightening on the part of the author. Though we know how the story comes out, we are riveted by the last-minute efforts, on the part of the ACLU, the NAACP, and various lawyers and pressure groups opposed to capital punishment, to get a stay of execution from the courts. But Mailer's reliance on the documentary facts, unleavened by comment, art, or opinion, also results in frequent and extended longueurs.

There are some moments in the book, though, when we can feel Mailer struggling against his self-imposed strait-jacket, as an image leaps off the page with a rhetorical power entirely his own: after Gary is sentenced, Nicole looks out to the summer light, where "the horseflies were mean as insanity itself," and the eyes of a lawyer gleam "like his hooves were flashing in the air." Whenever Gilmore's crippled mother, Bessie, is speaking—and she is the one figure in the book with the premeditated look and sound of a character in a novel—we get a sense of the unrealized literary possibilities in this mountain of factuality. Imprisoned by severe arthritis and poverty in a plastic trailer, Bessie Gilmore is tormented by "floods of misery that a son of her flesh had killed the sons of other mothers." Trying to wring some comfort from good times in the past, she thinks of memory, in her loneliness, as "one's best and only friend. It was certainly the only touch to soothe those outraged bones that would chafe in the flesh until they were a skeleton free of the flesh." It is hard to believe that an uneducated woman from Provo could summon up this macabre and finely drawn image, full blown from Jacobean tragedy, or that she would ruminate, like Willa Cather, on "the ongoing world that ground along like iron-banded wagon wheels in the prairie grass." Unhappily, such eloquence is scarce, especially in the first half of the book, where the prose is so slavishly faithful to the banality of the speakers that it becomes soporific.

Often numbing and fitfully enthralling, this "true-life novel" is an idiosyncratically mixed performance even for Norman Mailer, who habitually lavishes his best and his worst on everything he writes. Yet there is so little of Mailer's temperament and language here that one hesitates to call it *his* performance. It is curious that most of the reviews of *The Executioner's Song* have ignored its collective provenance, though this surely accounts for those dull stretches when Mailer is grinding out the words of others instead of using his own. It is even more curious that this least characteristic work has received the most unqualified praise Mailer has had in years. For some reason the baffling flatness of style has aroused interpretative extravagance in some reviewers who seem to feel duty bound to prove there is more here than meets the eye. On the front page of the New York *Times Book Review* Joan Didion announced that Mailer's subject is "that vast emptiness at the center of the Western experience, a nihilism antithetical not only to literature but to most other forms of human endeavor," when in fact he pays scarcely any attention to the peculiarly

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Western and Mormon aspects of the Gilmore saga. If Miss Didion means to imply, as I think she does, that the Western emptiness is in some way accountable for Gilmore's impulse to murder, she is ascribing a visionary design to the book which is simply not there.

For reviewers who want to make cultural statements, it is tempting, I suppose, to see a profound connection between Mailer's earlier defense of psychopathic violence and the mindless savagery of a punk like Gary Gilmore, though Mailer has wisely refrained from dressing him up as a Raskolnikov of the Rockies. This did not prevent the reviewer in the *New Republic* from calling *The Executioner's Song* a parable of "existential nakedness and plastic death," and Gilmore a hero who "challenged the anonymous, soulless system of public morality for the sake of his identity." Mailer is too intelligent to commit such crudity, and in any case the reviewers seem to be thinking not about the Mailer of this book but of the "psychic outlaw" who long ago proclaimed that he "would settle for nothing less than a revolution in the consciousness of our time." Two decades later, he is willing to settle for much less.

Finally, for all its length *The Executioner's Song* still fails to tell us some things it seems important to know. Since the persons who contributed so much to this true-life novel are not invented creatures whose existence comes to a halt on the last page, we are left wondering who gets how big a slice of what is by now a substantial pie. With all the money thrown around in the story, and the hefty rewards for Schiller and Mailer, it is shocking to learn at the end that the person who was most generous to Gary Gilmore from his first day in Provo to his execution—his uncle Vern Damico—was impoverished less than a year after the excitement died down. He had no money for a badly needed operation because his wife was ill and he was left holding the bag in lawsuits brought against his nephew's estate by the state of Utah, insurance companies, and the victims' widows. Did any of the Schiller-Mailer earnings make their way to Uncle Vern, or help Bessie Gilmore find a less demeaning place to live? Nasty and suspicious questions, but if this were truly a novel and not true life, we would not ask them.

Music

The Russian Wave

Samuel Lipman

For some time now the papers have been full of stories about the flight of Soviet performers from their homeland. Consistent with the central role of ballet in Russian official culture and the present dance boom in the West, most of the coverage has gone to the defection of well-known dancers from famous companies; merely to mention the names of Nureyev, Baryshnikov, and Makarova is to convey how great has been the Soviet loss. But celebrated though they are, only a few dance stars have defected. In fact, by far the greatest number of artists leaving the USSR have been musicians.

It is difficult to know just how many musicians have been involved in the current emigration. The process has been going on for the past ten years or so, and many countries have provided havens for the refugees. In the United States alone, enough emigrés have arrived to have already made their presence felt in the best orchestras. Furthermore, an orchestra consisting largely of these new arrivals appeared in Carnegie Hall last July to enthusiastic critical response. In the world of free-lance musicians the story is the same: competition from the ex-Soviet musicians in New York is now sufficiently noticeable to cause the beginnings of resentment from their native American colleagues. And on the educational level, similar developments are taking place. Our music schools, both in New York and the country at large, are hiring formerly Russian faculty, and at such distinguished institutions as Juilliard in the winter and Aspen in the summer, young Russian students are proving both ambitious and highly talented.

Most of these newcomers, of course, will of necessity find themselves filling the same kinds of subordinate and supporting roles they would have filled had they remained in the Soviet Union. A few of them, however, are aiming at nothing less than the highest artistic renown and commercial success. A

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spectacular case in point has been the triumphant career in the West of Mstislav Rostropovich, the world's leading cellist both before and after his enforced permanent exile from Russia. Now increasingly active as a conductor—he is the music director of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C.—Rostropovich has been joined on this side of the Iron Curtain by one of the most famous Soviet musicians, the conductor Kiril Kondrashin. Indeed, this new defection must have been particularly galling to the Russians, for Kondrashin had been a popular cultural ambassador for the USSR since his collaboration with Van Cliburn in Moscow and later in New York at the time of the 1958 Tchaikowsky contest.

In an as yet less stellar way several highly touted emigrés have begun to make careers as soloists in America. Among them are the pianist Bella Davidovich and the violinists Nina Beilina and Albert Markov. And there are now former Russians just embarking on careers who were too young in their homeland to have been anything more than students—for example, the pianist Youri Egorov and the violinist Dmitri Sitkovetsky, Davidovich's son. Both of these artists owe their prominence to contests in the West. Sitkovetsky recently won the important Fritz Kreisler Prize in Vienna, and Egorov was so successful with the audience at the 1977 Cliburn competition in Fort Worth that his exclusion there from the final round (due, some said, to Soviet pressure) made him an instant celebrity.

WHY have so many representatives of an important musical culture left their own country to seek refuge abroad in a different and perhaps even alien world? In general, of course, it can hardly come as a shock that some people at least want to leave the Soviet Union. The uncomfortable conditions of daily material existence must be increasingly difficult to bear as both the knowledge of life in the West becomes more diffused throughout Soviet society and the realistic possibility of foreign travel increases. And among Jews—who are heavily represented in the musical life of the Soviet Union—the desire to leave can easily be understood, as can the grudging willingness of a suspicious government to let them go.

Still, it might have been thought that musicians, because of their special position in Soviet life, would prove a group at the very least reconciled to making the best of the opportunities offered them at home. These opportunities are great, and all the more impressive for being a feature of Russian life going back to the half-century before the revolutions of 1917. The Czarist government encouraged music on a large scale, both through official support of institutions and through personal, aristocratic patronage. Russian conservatories—chief among them those in Moscow and St. Petersburg—became models for the world; foreign specialists were brought in as needed, and for native Russians—indeed especially for Jews—music quickly became a field in which rapid social advancement was possible in a notably stratified society. And increasingly, private, non-aristocratic philanthropy became effective and publicized, as the rising new middle classes entered upon the stage of Russian economic and political history.

Going hand in hand with all this support was the magnificent achievement of Russian prerevolutionary music. Building upon a solid folk and church foundation, Russian composers from the middle of the 19th century on felt free to import what they needed from European models and at the same time, as in the case of Mussorgsky, were able to express something of the real national soul. Since Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikowsky in the last decades of the past century, Russian works have been a central part of the world repertory. Russians were also in the forefront of musical modernism; Scriabin, for example, was an avant-garde hero at home and abroad. By the time of World War I, leadership in Russian music had passed from the hands of the conservative melodists to the controversial Stravinsky and somewhat later also the *enfant terrible* Prokofiev.

In the field of performance, Russians were perhaps even more prominent. In Anton Rubinstein they had produced a keyboard virtuoso in the class of Liszt, and such of his successors as Sergei Rachmaninoff maintained the standard. Russian violinists were scarcely less important: Mischa Elman and Jascha Heifetz were only the brightest of the many stars produced by Leopold Auer, the St. Petersburg teacher who founded what has remained to this day the most influential school of violin playing the world has known.

WHATEVER the nihilistic implications of the Bolshevik revolution for other previously established economic and social classes, the new regime soon made clear that art in general and music in particular were more than ever to be nurtured by the state. Strenuous attempts were made to bring great music to the masses, both at their work sites and at concert halls and schools from which they had, it was felt, formerly been excluded.

During the decade after 1917 many different approaches to composition, both Left and Right, continued to flourish in the Soviet Union. The meteoric rise of Dmitri Shostakovich began with his graduation piece (the First Symphony) from the Leningrad Conservatory in 1925. The new regime now had its first major composer, a world figure who had been trained since the revolution. And upon the return of Prokofiev in 1932 from self-imposed exile, the USSR was in the enviable position of having not only one but two celebrated artists able and seemingly willing to provide exciting new repertory for performers and audiences alike.

Though the purge years of the 1930's were felt also in music, it would seem that musicians were less affected by physical violence and incarceration than other comparable groups in the USSR. Not only was Shostakovich quickly taken back into the fold after severe criticism from the highest levels in 1936; after some earlier difficulty, Prokofiev also found a warm welcome with his 1939 score for Eisenstein's film *Alexander Nevsky*. Throughout World War II—called

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in the Soviet Union "The Great Patriotic War"—musicians were protected, encouraged, and widely used as morale builders at home and propagandists for their country's cause to the world.

Similarly, while musical life once more felt political pressure after the war in the Zhdanov anti-formalist campaign in 1948, musicians were again treated rather leniently, especially as compared to writers. And after the death of Stalin in 1953, Soviet composers began feeling freer to write a reasonably modern-sounding music. With the slightly later thaw in East-West relations, Soviet performers began to travel, and still represent perhaps the most frequently exported element of Russian society.

In the past thirty or so years the list of fabulously successful Soviet musicians on the world scene has not only included Shostakovich and (posthumously) Prokofiev, but also Khachaturian, whose "Sabre Dance" from the ballet *Gayane* became an international hit. Even more successful abroad have been Soviet performers like pianists Emil Gilels and Sviatoslav Richter and violinists Leonid Kogan and the late David Oistrakh. The supply of young Soviet performers following in the footsteps of these four masters has seemed unlimited, a sure sign of the Soviet musical accomplishment and of the large-scale efforts in education and patronage devoted to its support.

Partly as a spin-off from the foreign success of Russian musicians and partly as a result of public policy and the operative values of Russian life, musicians, whatever the level of their accomplishment, are highly respected members of Soviet society. They live, it would seem, somewhat better than other comparable members of the Soviet non-scientific intelligentsia. In theory at least, they suffer no unemployment; the privileges and perquisites open to the ambitious and the competent range from housing through vacations nearby and travel abroad. To Soviet Jews in particular these opportunities are attractive; unlike many other Soviet professions, music remains at the present time open and even hospitable to them.

But if the musical state of affairs is seemingly desirable in the Soviet Union, why do so many musicians leave? Beyond the stereotyped bits seized upon by journalists and the private testimony of individual emigrés, little detailed and solid information about the daily lives and thoughts of Soviet musicians has as yet been published. But fortunately our knowledge about the conditions under which Soviet musicians work has been richly supplemented by the recent publication of the extraordinary memoirs, called simply *To Dance*, of Valery Panov,* the brilliant *demi-caractère* dancer of the Kirov ballet who with his wife Galina emigrated to Israel in 1974 after many years of suffering and struggle.

The picture which emerges from correlating Panov's experiences in the related field of ballet with the scattered comments of emigré musicians adds up to vastly more than the petty annoyances and irritations inevitable in a flourishing bureaucratic state. Indeed, it soon becomes clear that every putatively favorable feature of official policy toward the arts in the USSR is balanced and most often overbalanced by the use of support as a means of control and of the denial of support as a means of enforcement and punishment.

Thus, state-supported music schools, so lavishly endowed, are the only music schools; denial of admission to them, or failure after entrance, effectively closes off the possibility of a musical career. Composers must write to please the state or find their works unperformable. Even pieces written more than a half-century ago by such giants as Strauss are frequently banned. Concerts subsidized and presented by the state, though their ticket prices may be trifling, must feature state-approved repertory played by state-approved performers; even the audiences themselves at these concerts may, at the whim of the state, be restricted to notables and functionaries. Foreign tours scheduled by the state concert management take place in the context of official foreign political and economic policy; participation in them, perhaps the most desirable plum available today to Soviet citizens, may be, and frequently is, arbitrarily denied to anyone suspected of independence or political unreliability. Plainly, under socialism as under capitalism, those who pay the piper call the tune; but where there is only one payer—the state—there all too easily can be only one tune.

All this would be bad enough if bureaucratic enforcement and caprice were, in the post-Stalin years, limited to persuasion and the provision of enticing rewards. But in fact there is abundant evidence that behind the mechanisms of economic pressure and patriotic exhortation lies the ultimate sanction—the threat of terror. To assume, as is so often done, that the death of Stalin marked a fundamental structural change in the wielding of Soviet power is to forget that the organs of state security remain in place, and continue to employ methods of provocation and incarceration. The hands of both the Communist-party apparatus and the KGB itself are never far from any Russian citizen, and vastly closer to the members of so public a profession as music. And there is also memory: the generation slaughtered by Stalin and his henchmen was that of the parents of the middle-aged Russian of today.

Such a state of affairs applies with special force, as Panov stresses, to Jews, who at the best of times in Russia have been seen as inherently untrustworthy. When a Jew announces his decision to emigrate, the possibility of further life in the Soviet Union is snatched from him as he waits; and as is also true in the case of defectors, his family and former associates are forced to abase themselves publicly by condemning the renegade. Predictably, the ripple effect of such intimidation and humiliation is one of both heightened fear and increased desire to leave.

REMARKABLY, this new musical emigration is not the first but rather the third in our century. It was preceded by the flight of artists from the Bolshevik revolution and

* This book is now available in paperback, Avon, 397 pp., $3.95.

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its bloody aftermath, and then only a few years later by the exodus from Nazi Germany, Austria, and the lands overrun by Hitler.

The emigration from the fledgling Soviet Union after 1917 of composers alone was of the highest significance. Stravinsky, resident abroad during World War I and the 1917 revolutions, did not return to his homeland. Rachmaninoff, after a brief taste of life under the Bolsheviks, left at the end of 1917, never to return. Prokofiev left in 1918 and did not, as has been noted earlier, return until the 1930's. Sergei Diaghilev—important because of his energizing effect on musicians as well as on dancers and painters—also refused to return home to his country under Bolshevik rule. In the world of performance, Soviet losses were equally severe: such prodigious artists as the legendary basso Feodor Chaliapin, violinists Jascha Heifetz and Nathan Milstein, cellist Gregor Piatigorsky, conductor Serge Koussevitzky, and pianist Vladimir Horowitz were all exiles from Bolshevism.

The post-Hitler wave encompassed just about every well-known Jewish musical figure in continental Europe as well as some non-Jews endangered by marriage or advocacy of modernism. The composers included Arnold Schoenberg and Paul Hindemith from Germany and Béla Bartók from Hungary. The performers included singers like Lotte Lehmann, Friedrich Schorr, and Elisabeth Schumann; pianists Artur Schnabel and Rudolf Serkin; violinists Adolf Busch, Bronislaw Huberman, and Joseph Szigeti; cellist Emanuel Feuermann; harpsichordist Wanda Landowska; conductors Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer. And these artists were only the visible tip of the iceberg. Less well-known soloists and conductors, orchestra players by the hundreds, distinguished teachers, musicologists, and historians all fled from the immediate threat of violence and death.

More was involved, of course, than all these many individuals; as a group they brought with them the heritage of the 19th-century golden age of music. Thus the Russian emigration provided the West with virtually the last composers to have written what are today widely accepted as classical masterpieces. Among these works are the three famous ballets of Stravinsky—*Firebird, Petrushka,* and *The Rite of Spring*—and Rachmaninoff's Second and Third Piano Concertos and his Second Symphony. Though these pieces were all done before the revolution, they were widely disseminated only after their composers had left Russia. Especially in the United States, their influence—conservative with Rachmaninoff and modernist with Stravinsky—was enormous in the sense both of inspiring imitators and of helping to close the classical canon.

The influence of early Russian emigré performers has been similarly great. The names of Horowitz and Heifetz remain synonymous with musical stardom and its attendant riches and publicity, solidly based in both cases upon the very highest technical and musical accomplishment. Like Chaliapin before him, Horowitz in particular has been associated with Russian music; his playing of concertos by Rachmaninoff and Tchaikowsky has produced perhaps his greatest commercial success in concerts and on records.

IF THE genius of the post-1917 emigrés lay in an all-conquering and sometimes even exotic musical romanticism, the post-1933 emigrés specialized in high seriousness and profound intellectuality. Both Schoenberg and Hindemith, each in his own very different way, were "pure" musicians, composers for the highly tutored. Deeply opposed to—and unfitted for—popular success, Schoenberg was the last great system-builder music has known, and his mental constructs were to rule most of the world of musical composition for a half-century after he first promulgated them in the early 1920's. Hindemith's functional compositions, written respectfully in the musical spirit of J.S. Bach, were greatly effective, especially in the United States, in combating the public perception (itself to some extent a legacy from the earlier Russian emigrés) of music as an arena of tumultuous emotion and gladiatorial combat.

This predominantly cerebral quality extended to the performers of the Hitler emigration as well. Not only was Artur Schnabel celebrated for his programming of composers—Beethoven, Schubert, and Mozart—who made the greatest demands of concentration on the audience; he was known to an even more devoted audience as the scholarly editor of the most influential performing edition of the Beethoven piano sonatas produced in this century. The violinist Adolf Busch, brother of the brilliant Mozart opera conductor Fritz Busch, father-in-law of Rudolf Serkin (important both as pianist and director of the Marlboro Festival), and teacher of Yehudi Menuhin, used his performances of great music as if they were sermons on the superior morality of art. Equally high-minded was Wanda Landowska, a non-German emigré from Hitler: her famous remark to a colleague, "You play Bach your way, I will play him his way," epitomizes both her musical character and her public function.

Nor, in this context, can the non-performing and non-composing musical refugees of the 1930's be ignored. In Germany Alfred Einstein had been music critic of the *Berliner Tageblatt,* editor of the *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft,* and editor of three revisions of Riemann's standard *Musiklexicon.* In the United States among his many writings were two widely read musico-historical classics: *Mozart, His Character, His Work* (1945) and the still-used textbook *Music in the Romantic Era* (1947). Going beyond music in itself, Theodor Adorno, a music critic as well as an exponent of the Frankfurt school of sociology, advised another Hitler emigré, Thomas Mann, on the passages in *Doctor Faustus* which are based upon Schoenberg's twelve-tone system. And as in other areas of music, every major American educational institution—and hundreds of minor ones—felt the analyzing and cataloguing presence of emigré European-trained musical minds.

Another factor, often overlooked, is that the Hitler emigration of musicians brought its own audience along with it. All over the United States, attendance at musi-

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cal events quickly began to be marked by increasing numbers of refugee cognoscenti. In New York, for example, the Hunter College Saturday Night Series, until its demise in the 1970's the most distinguished recital series in America, was founded by and for these emigrés. As early as 1936, the New Friends of Music had been established in New York City not only as a successor to the old Friends of Music but also as a copy of and replacement for the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna; so successful was it in replicating European traditions that it was soon wittily christened the "Old Friends of Artur Schnabel."

WHAT of the latest musical emigration? Is it bringing with it a glittering culture new to us, of a stature comparable to its illustrious predecessors? The answer, alas, would seem to be no. At the outset it is clear that no composers of stature are included among the new arrivals. Though this absence is only consistent with the general paucity of such figures the world over, the lack means that the primary requirement of musical significance —important new music—can hardly be satisfied. Those who have left, in any case, are essentially performers.

The first major figure of the wave to leave the Soviet Union was the pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy, who departed in the 1960's. As a technician he is brilliant, and in the past has been infallible; as an interpreter he is satisfying in a restrained way; as an influence on either music or its performance he has not been important. The massive reclame surrounding Rostropovich (and his wife, soprano Galina Vishnevskaya) makes sound judgment of musical value more difficult than in the case of the rather colorless Ashkenazy. Yet even here it can be said that Rostropovich's conducting—with the extravagant gestures and bearlike personal charm that have won him so much public affection—falls far short of his cello playing in musical depth and technical skill. And even in the cello world where Rostropovich has for many years been king, Pablo Casals (a refugee in the 1930's from Franco's Spain) remains the most significant influence both on his colleagues and upon the aural memory of the audience. As for the newest star arrival, Kondrashin, he is still an unknown creative quantity, all too firmly associated to his detriment with the overplayed Russian classics.

This general estimate seems to hold true for the less famous emigré musicians as well. Such, at least, was the depressing conclusion produced by the past fall concert season in New York, which featured major recitals by at least five of these new arrivals. Of the three pianists involved, Bella Davidovich (now in her early fifties) was the oldest, the possessor of the largest Soviet reputation prior to her emigration, and the first to appear this season in New York; Oxana Yablonskaya, in her thirties, had a smaller though important career in the USSR; Sergei Edelmann, in his teens, had come to the United States with his family while still a student. The two violinists involved in this unplanned festival were Nina Beilina and Albert Markov (Yablonskaya's brother-in-law), both in their forties; Beilina in particular had been the recipient of critical praise placing her in the top rank of world violinists.

DAVIDOVICH's recital took place at Carnegie Hall in early October. For a large and sophisticated audience she played the 24 Chopin Preludes and the *Arabesque* and *Carnaval* of Schumann. This program of famous pieces was enthusiastically received by the audience, and only slightly less so by the daily New York press. The predictable commercial success followed on schedule: within a month she had future bookings running to well over a hundred thousand dollars in fees. Such success seemed reasonable. Davidovich had in fact played a technically demanding program with pianistic solidity and musicality and had exhibited an immensely attractive stage bearing.

And yet her concert, which was for this listener the high-water mark of all the recent emigré musical activity, was hardly reassuring when considered from a standpoint more profound than pleasing sounds, audience success, and commercial potential. The choice of program itself was disquieting. To call the pieces Davidovich played famous is not to disparage them. It is only to state the obvious fact that they have been, for over a hundred years, in the ears of every music lover and the fingers of every pianist. It cannot be denied that one consequence of such familiarity is that an artist playing them in an important debut puts himself up against memories of great performances past. But this risk affects the performer alone; just because the field in which the risk is taken is so familiar, it lacks musical significance unless the artist takes the further—today almost unimaginable —gamble of playing those pieces in a new way.

This Davidovich did not do. Her playing fell comfortably within the mainstream of contemporary pianism. Slight (and not important) technical roughness was easily balanced by her ability to keep the melodic line clear at all times in these supremely melodic works. The only distracting feature of her playing was a marked tendency to stress the beginnings of phrases and then gently back away from their climaxes and natural endings. In so doing, she was representative of a widespread tendency in solo performance today—the understatement of high points and an almost apologetic refusal to underline dynamically the basic structural features of romantic favorites.

It was thus the very conventionality of Davidovich's playing which made her choice of program seem so uninteresting. Even in the light of the present full-scale retreat from both contemporary and less familiar older music—nowhere more marked than in the case of star instrumentalists and singers—it still comes as a surprise that a not yet aged artist can choose for her American debut a program consisting entirely of chestnuts.*

* That this choice was not a one-time occurrence is shown not only by a hackneyed Los Angeles program the following month but also by her selection of repertory on her first records to be released in the West: on one record the Chopin Preludes again, and on the other the familiar Beethoven Sonatas, opus 31, no. 3 and the "Moonlight," along with the famous *Für Elise*.

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Perhaps most significantly missing from Davidovich's program was any sign that she is a Russian artist, and any sign of her Russian musical heritage—no Shostakovich (whose piano music is neglected), no contemporary Soviet music, either conservative or avant-garde, written by either supporters or opponents of the present regime. Nor was there any trace of earlier 20th-century Russian music—neither the famous Scriabin nor the ignored Glazunov and Miaskovsky nor any of the earlier music, as yet undiscovered in the West, of Balakirev, Liapunov, and their predecessors, including Glinka.

IT WOULD be pleasant to report that matters improved in the subsequent New York emigré concerts. But the musical weaknesses of the other artists seemed more marked than Davidovich's, and their programming, even when on occasion it included Russian or Soviet virtuoso war-horses, seemed equally vapid.

It might be objected that the recital in mid-October, also in Carnegie Hall, by violinist Nina Beilina was a special case; observers familiar with her playing felt that she had an off night. However this may be, her performance was rigid and heavy, her stage bearing frightened and artificial. And as with all these Russian artists, the choice of familiar program material—the Beethoven Sonata opus 30, no. 3, the Bach C-major unaccompanied Sonata in D-minor, and three Hungarian Dances—only concentrated maximum and unflattering attention on the soloist.

The last of the three Carnegie Hall recitals featured violinist Albert Markov. In at least a bow to our century, Markov began with the *Suite Italienne*, Stravinsky's 1933 arrangement for violin and piano of *Pulcinella*, his 1919-20 reworking of the music of Pergolesi. This composition, however third-hand it may be, presents major demands on the technique and wit of the violinist. These demands were hardly met by Markov, who throughout the recital seemed to be searching for something solid and comfortable. The Bach D-minor Partita (including the famous Chaconne) disclosed a magnificently steady bow arm as well as flawed intonation, and it was only the Second Sonata of Grieg that finally provided Markov with the toothsome material he evidently craved. Still more to his taste was the closing work, a Rhapsody "in the manner of Paganini" of the violinist's own composition. Sadly, all the whoops and slides, no matter how fiery of execution, only confirmed the impression of the entire recital, one of always lurking bad taste searching for public expression.

Two additional New York recitals by emigrés, less ambitious because given away from the world stage of Carnegie Hall, told much the same story. Oxana Yablonskaya demonstrated—in a program of piano favorites drawn from Beethoven, Chopin, Prokofiev, and Mussorgsky—a conventional musical personality tolerably well-served by a brilliant-sounding but often unreliable technical equipment. Sergei Edelmann's recital, if only because of the artist's youth, was more encouraging. Obviously a major talent, he performed familiar Beethoven, Chopin, and Prokofiev in a manner that retained excitement and even individuality despite a glassy and forced piano tone. It is not clear from this concert whether Edelmann will be able to control his youthful excesses and at the same time keep his present liveliness; still less is it clear that his personal potential can be realized in the present stultifying cultural, pedagogical, and commercial ambience of New York.

THE saddest aspect of all these concerts—and of the work of more famous ex-Soviet musicians—was how little the musicians involved seem to have brought over with them besides their own personal abilities. Because these abilities have been cultivated within the parameters of the current international style of musical performance, none of the emigrés has affected musical attitudes in the West toward the familiar music upon which they have concentrated.

But even though they have failed in this test of significance, they might have attempted a task vastly more important than any mere alteration in styles of performance. They might have presented us with a Russo-Soviet musical heritage which, except for a few famous works, is still unknown in the West, insufficiently written about by our scholars and historians,* and essentially unavailable (one assumes at the decision of the Soviet government) outside Russia on Western phonograph records.

It may be unfair to blame the Soviet emigrés—or their colleagues who have remained at home—for failing to accomplish this mission. Possibly they have made an unfavorable aesthetic judgment on this music, or perhaps their neglect of it is part of a wider rejection of Soviet life and culture as a whole. But whatever their reasons, and however justified they may be, the failure of the Soviet emigration to bring us, as the two previous emigrations of this century did, either new music or a new way of playing old music, severely limits the musical interest and artistic significance of the entire phenomenon.

Nevertheless, if the emigration lacks aesthetic importance, it possesses political and human significance. It demonstrates once again that totalitarian societies can neither seduce the loyalty of their subjects with carrots, nor compel their obedience with sticks. And it suggests to us what is so often forgotten: that beyond the ideology of distributive justice and subsidies to artists and intellectuals lie the need and desire for simple freedom. In the last analysis it is freedom, not music, that the new Soviet musical emigration is about. And that is both its own justification and justification enough.

* It is significant that the only currently available material in English on the Soviet musical world is Boris Schwarz's now outdated *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917-1970* (Norton, 1972).

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Books in Review

The American Past

AMERICA REVISED: HISTORY SCHOOLBOOKS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By FRANCES FITZGERALD. *Atlantic-Little, Brown. 218 pp. $9.95.*

Reviewed by KENNETH S. LYNN

One of the more curious intellectual developments of the last few years is the recent outbreak of concern among writers on the Left about the decline of authority in American life. During the riotous years of the Vietnam war, freedom was the principal concern of radical writers. When they spoke of the political leadership of the nation, or of its economic system, it was in terms that might better have been reserved for the description of despotisms. But now some of the erstwhile enemies of American tyranny are sounding a different alarm. The trouble with our society, it turns out, is that it has lost its rigor. Permissiveness has rotted out the structure of family life. Traditional faiths have given way to sentimentality. The instructional standards in our schools have become a joke. Personal self-discipline has deliquesced into self-indulgence.

In certain respects, the books and articles currently emerging from the Left are reminiscent of a conservative social criticism that was not entirely new when Irving Babbitt advanced it fifty years ago. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that the authors of these books and articles have experienced a political change of heart. They are very much the same people they were a decade ago, and the larger purpose of their calls for the renewal of certain forms of authority is to discredit others. In the emerging literature of what might be called leftist fundamentalism, the arguments often sound conservative, but their thrust is radical.

The political animus of this literature has largely gone unremarked by the reading public, even though its authors have made no attempt to conceal how they feel. The intellectual irresponsibility of their work has for the most part also been overlooked. For in an admittedly bad time for the United States, some audiences automatically seem to assume that if a book takes a dim view of American life, it cannot be wrong.

Take, for example, President Carter's astonishing decision last summer—reportedly on the advice of Mrs. Carter and Patrick Caddell—to berate the American people in language drawn from Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*. That Carter elected to whip us with Lasch says far more about the agitated state of mind in his White House than it does about the state of the Union. As a man of Carter's intelligence ought to have had no trouble in recognizing, even from a resumé offered by associates, *The Culture of Narcissism* elevates semi-accurate comments on self-evident American faults into a wildly improbable theory of collective personality change. Moreover, the book is suffused with hatred for capitalism. That Lasch's pseudoscholarship managed to impress Carter is bad enough, but how could he have failed to be put off by the political bias of the book? Apparently, he never gave it a thought—and the bizarre result was a speech in which a President of the United States echoed the animadversions of a writer whose deepest conviction is that the American way of life is dying, thank God.

One has to wonder whether the latest instance of leftist fundamentalism, Frances FitzGerald's *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century*, is even now on Carter's night table. Certainly it is impressing a lot of other worry warts. A two-page, prepublication spread in *Time* magazine in early September acclaimed the book as "heavily researched," and then proceeded to recapitulate its discouraging contentions without a murmur of dissent. Three weeks later, a Cornell University historian, Michael Kammen, filled a front-page review in the book section of the Washington *Post* with an assortment of compliments. "[Miss] FitzGerald's firm control over a mine of material is stunning," he wrote; her report, he predicted, would prove to be of "paramount importance" to historians, educators, parents, politicians, journalists, psychologists, sociologists, members of school boards, and civil libertarians. The first vindication of Professor Kammen's prophecy came in mid-October, when Miss FitzGerald was the featured speaker at a seminar sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities on the teaching of history. In no time, *America Revised* became a strong contender for the same prizes that were lavished upon Miss FitzGerald's first book, *Fire in the Lake* (1972).

Every poll in the early 1970's showed that while the American people wanted to end the war in Vietnam, they saw their country's aims as honorable. *Fire in the Lake*, however, spoke for a special constituency which wanted to believe that America's intrusion into Southeast Asia was not just a monumental blunder, but an international crime. Looking back across the history of the war, Miss FitzGerald announced that it was no longer possible to say that

> Vietnam was the "quagmire," the *"pays pourri"* that had enmired and corrupted the United States. It was the other way around. The U. S. officials had enmired Vietnam. They had corrupted the Vietnamese and, by extension, the American soldiers who had to fight amongst the Vietnamese in their service. By involving the United States in a

KENNETH S. LYNN, *whose books include* The Dream of Success *and* Visions of America, *teaches history at Johns Hopkins.*

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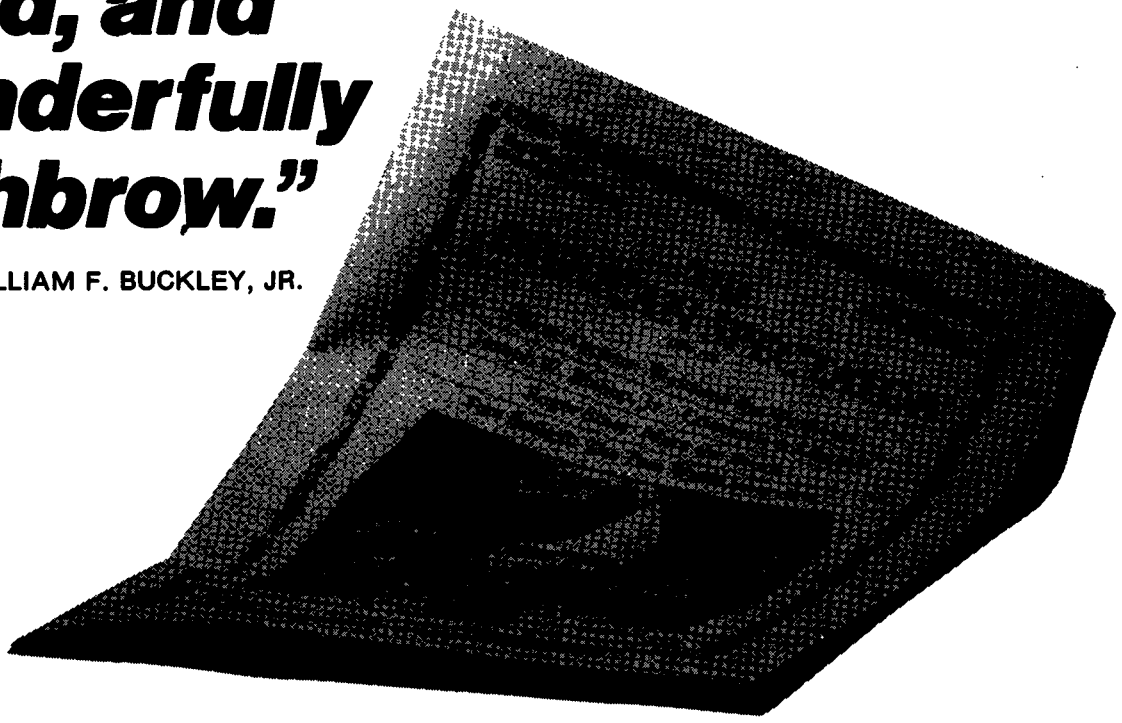

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fruitless and immoral war, they had also corrupted themselves.

The depravity of what we had done to Vietnam is symbolized in the concluding chapter of *Fire in the Lake* in the description of a Saigon girl "on spindle heels" picking her way over a "barrier of rotting fruit" toward "a waiting Buick." From this degrading scene—unqualified by any acknowledgement on the author's part that the girl heading for the Buick was practicing a profession that was not invented under the Johnson administration and not destined to disappear under Communism—Miss FitzGerald turns in her final paragraph to the vision of a coming time of catharsis, when "the narrow flame of revolution" would at last "cleanse the lake of Vietnamese society from the corruption and disorder of the American war." The antiseptic metaphor totally blocks awareness of the unspeakable filthiness of the Hanoi regime, but the fans of *Fire in the Lake* were oblivious to this deficiency. To them, the metaphor simply completed a satisfying thought—the god of battles was on the side of the forces of purity and against the forces of impurity, as in the moral fables of an earlier America.

America Revised considerably strengthens my impression that Miss FitzGerald is not the brilliant scholar-reporter her admirers think she is. Her bibliography of the secondary literature she consulted on the subject of teaching history to schoolchildren reveals that she did not adequately prepare herself for the task of writing about it, for no mention is made of such standard works as Bessie Louise Pierce's *Public Opinion and the Teaching of History in the United States* and the various writings of Howard K. Beale. As for the argument Miss FitzGerald makes, it is so inaccurate as to raise the question of whether she actually has read many of the textbooks she mentions, or has simply managed to deceive herself about what they contain.

Although thin and schematic, *America Revised* holds up reasonably well until the author comes to the period she is most interested in, the years since 1950. The first modern texts, she rightly points out, appeared in the 1890's. Their realistic spirit was reflected in their terse, declarative sentences. Their materials were organized into clearly delineated themes, such as "The English Colonies" or "The Rise of Parties." Their pages gave less space to battles than had the romantic texts of the earlier 19th century and much more space to politics and economics. Their expression of authorial partisanship was muted.

If the 1890's was the "Quatrocento" [*sic*] of the genre, the years between 1910 and 1930 were "surely the Renaissance." In 1911, the first edition of David Muzzey's *American History* was published. Soon, a host of other books by such distinguished academics as Albert Bushnell Hart, Charles and Mary Beard, and Andrew C. McLaughlin appeared. These historians brought an individual grace to the impersonal narrative style developed in the 90's, and they enlivened the earlier emphasis on objectivity with a more or less vivid strain of dissenting criticism, for they were creatures of the era of Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and they all believed—albeit in varying degrees—in the reformist principles of the Progressive movement.

The first major effort to interfere with the freedom of expression of the textbook writers occurred after World War I. The mayor of Chicago and the Hearst press accused a number of texts of Anglophilism. The DAR protested against the deemphasis of American military history. The Ku Klux Klan detected the presence of pro-Jewish and pro-Catholic propaganda. Private utilities associations put pressure on publishers to present a more pro-business point of view. Nevertheless, the texts of the Progressive historians continued to sell throughout the 1920's, along with the new works of more conservative historians.

THE ideological diversity of history texts reached its peak during the Depression, when the list of liberal and conservative offerings was augmented by works emphasizing economic history and reflecting "a hazy kind of socialism." The most notable of these new volumes was a series by Harold Rugg, which discussed with considerable candor the plight of the unemployed, the effects on workers of industrial speedup, and the problems faced by immigrants. Because the wave of right-wing protest had subsided, publishers felt no reluctance about bringing out such books.

The warning signal that the era of diversity was ending came in 1939, with the sudden and simultaneous attack on the Rugg series by the Advertising Federation of America, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the American Legion. In 1938, the Rugg books had sold 289,000 copies; in 1944, sales came to a mere 21,000 copies; not long thereafter, the books disappeared. Conservative pressure groups, newly emboldened by the patriotism of the war years, attacked other textbooks as well. By 1950, according to Miss FitzGerald, the protesters "had been so successful that they had nothing more to complain about: the texts had become reflections of the National Association of Manufacturers viewpoint." A few years later, she says categorically, "there were no more dissenting books on the market." (Having temporarily forgotten these statements, she remarks two pages later that the revised editions of Muzzey's reform-minded *American History* "went on selling strongly through the 40's and 50's.")

THE notion that the 1950's was a dead time in the intellectual history of the United States is one of the favorite shibboleths of radical writers, and Miss FitzGerald keeps hammering the point home. The history books of the 50's, we are informed yet once again, were ideologically all of a piece. They also were implacably upbeat. Inside their covers,

> America was perfect: the greatest nation in the world, and the embodiment of democracy, freedom, and technological progress. For them, the country never changed in any important way: its values and its political institutions remained constant from the time of the American Revolution.

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The 1960's, however, blew off the hermetic seal of NAM orthodoxy with a bang, in "the most dramatic rewriting of history ever to take place in American schoolbooks." The revolution began in 1965, when the assassination of President Kennedy entered the texts. Shortly thereafter, all sorts of problems began to crop up "like measles," not just in the concluding sections dealing with contemporary history, but in the accounts of earlier periods as well. By the 1970's, a sense of endless trouble was running rampant through the texts. To read these new books in comparison with the old was to feel that "nothing less than the character of the United States" had changed.

At every point, the textbook revolution was aided and abetted by pressure groups. For the first time in publishing history, large-scale protests were heard from liberal organizations and from racial and ethnic minorities—black Americans, Mexican Americans, American Indians, Puerto Ricans, and so on. Today, a dozen organizations, from the B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League to the Council on Interracial Books, regularly monitor textbooks for bias.

America Revised would have us believe that the publishers have never offered much resistance to their critics, and that their craven-ness is essentially the fault of the free-enterprise system. The textbook business is highly competitive, Miss FitzGerald points out, and publishers live in dread of offending the school boards, the school superintendents, and the state committees which adopt the texts they want from a wide range of choices. In response to the protests following World War I, publishers in the 20's ceased the practice—or so Miss FitzGerald insists, even though her own account of the textbooks published in the 30's indicates otherwise—of commissioning one author to write a book. Academic historians were invited to collaborate with schoolteachers or school administrators, preferably from another region of the country. Eventually, many texts acquired, in addition to multiple authors, a general editor, an editorial adviser, and a clutch of consultants. In the modern publishing business, *America Revised* avers, American history books are not so much written as "developed."

In the most sensational part of her book, Miss FitzGerald charges that publishers were so responsive to the militant mood of the late 60's and early 70's that they began putting out books which abandoned some of the most famous heroes of American history in favor of figures like the slave Crispus Attucks, whose sole claim to historical fame is that he was the first victim of the Boston Massacre. "Poor Columbus!" exclaims Miss FitzGerald. In today's texts, she sweepingly declares, he is nothing but a "minor character," a "walk-on."

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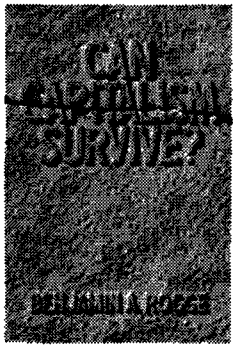

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Even those books that "have not replaced his picture with a Mayan temple or an Iroquois mask do not credit him with discovering America. . . . The Vikings, they say, preceded him to the New World." Daniel Boone, too, has "all but disappeared" from the textbooks, and General Custer "has given way to Chief Crazy Horse."

In sum, *America Revised* is full of alarming news. In a time of multiplying troubles in the United States, Miss FitzGerald's book announces that we do not even have a familiar history to hang on to any more. Thanks to the battering that the texts have received since the 1940's, first from the Right and then from the Left, their recapitulations of the nation's past have been reduced to a patchwork quilt of political propitiations. "Poor America!" we might exclaim, if it were not for the fact that *America Revised* contains so much fiction.

THE collapse of the reliability of Miss FitzGerald's book is marked by the point at which she abruptly ceases to talk about the political opinions of the textbook writers. She makes it clear early on that David Muzzey and his contemporaries were Progressives, and that Harold Rugg had considerably more advanced ideas. Why, then, does she not tell us about the political opinions of the textbook writers of the 1950's? The answer probably is that if she had, it would have destroyed the credibility of what she wanted to say about their books.

The English historian of American history, J. R. Pole, recalls in his new book of essays, *Paths to the American Past*, that nearly every American historian whom he met following World War II was a New Dealer. It would appear from this statement—and from similar statements by other American historians—that if Miss FitzGerald had endeavored to demonstrate that the American historians who turned out textbooks in the 50's were all admirers of the NAM, she would not have succeeded. If, on the other hand, she had frankly conceded that at least some of them had New Deal sympathies, she would have been forced to argue that these liberal authors were so lacking in personal courage and professional rectitude as to have been willing to sign their names to books in which they did not believe. This she appears unwilling to have done, and therefore she finesses the whole question of what the textbook writers of the 50's believed. She builds her case against a conformist historiography entirely on content analysis.

Her conclusions, however, about the ideological unanimity of the textbooks of the 50's cannot bear critical scrutiny. Even if we set aside the fact that Muzzey's *American History* sold well in the 50's, it is grossly misleading to say that there were no textbooks on the market during that time which did not reflect right-wing animus. There was, in fact, considerable diversity of opinion in the textbooks of the period. If Moon and MacGowan's *Story of Our Land and People* (1957) damns the New Deal with faint praise, Wilder, Ludlum, and Brown's *This is America's Story* (1952) portrays Franklin Roosevelt in the same heroic light that illuminates the histories of such ardent New Dealers as Frank Freidel and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.:

> When Franklin D. Roosevelt was thirty-nine years old, he was stricken with infantile paralysis. The doctors said his legs were so badly paralyzed that he might never walk again. But Roosevelt refused to give up. He triumphed over the disease, although it left him badly crippled. Through this triumph he changed into a man who well knew and well understood sorrow and suffering. When Franklin D. Roosevelt became President, the country was full of suffering. Men who cannot find work, who lose their homes, their farms, their savings—these men are not sick, but they are suffering and need help. Roosevelt was determined to put all the power and wealth of the United States to work to end the depression. . . .

Miss FitzGerald's statement that the texts of the 50's present America as perfect is also false. The most enduring conception of the American textbook tradition is that the story of the American Dream is uncompleted, that the nation is still struggling to fulfill its ideals. The texts of the 50's are very much a part of that tradition. In the words of one of them: "At home there are many difficult problems to solve if the American way of life is to be carried forward and if all Americans are to have a chance to live satisfying lives."

Miss FitzGerald's summary of what a triumphant pluralism did to the canon of American history in the late 60's and early 70's is the stuff of which headlines are made, but it badly exaggerates the facts of the matter. Crispus Attucks, first of all, did not enter the textbooks with the civil-rights movement of the 60's, as Miss FitzGerald implies, for he was already familiar to earlier generations of schoolchildren who had grown up on such books as Harlow's *Story of America* (1947). The contention that Columbus is nothing but a bit player these days who is not even credited with the discovery of America borders on absurdity. Textbooks throughout the whole modern period have acknowledged the Viking explorations at the same time that they have lauded Columbus for a stupendous achievement, and most recent texts continue to do so. Twenty years ago, Moon and MacGowan devoted five pages to Columbus; in 1977, Bidna, Greenberg, and Spitz's *We the People* gave him three pages, but their book could hardly be accused of reducing the discoverer to a walk-on part. Despite what Miss FitzGerald says about the virtual disappearance of Daniel Boone, Todd and Curti's *Rise of the American Nation* (1972) accords the Kentuckian five paragraphs and a picture, and he is alive and kicking in other books as well. Current, De Conde, and Dante's *United States History* (1967) mentions both Crazy Horse *and* General Custer, as does Leinwand's *The Pageant of American History* (1975).

Last May, at a conference on "The Textbook in American Education" at the Library of Congress, Alexander J. Burke, Jr., the president of McGraw-Hill, sharply criticized Miss FitzGerald's *New Yorker* articles—which subsequently

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became *America Revised*—for perpetuating ancient myths about the textbook publishing business. The popular misconceptions in her articles included the notion that textbooks are developed by committees, not written by authors, and the insistence that the choice of authors is dictated by the desire to impress the textbook adoption authorities. I myself do not know enough about the publishing business to say whether Mr. Burke's irritation with Miss FitzGerald is warranted, or not. Yet I must say that I am sympathetic with him, if only because Miss FitzGerald offers so very little hard evidence for her claims, and no supporting footnotes whatsoever. *America Revised* attempts to discredit an enormous business enterprise mainly through a combination of office-corridor gossip and provocative rhetoric.

IN EXPOSING the untrustworthiness of Miss FitzGerald's book, I do not mean to create the impression that I myself am content with the textbooks which are in use in the schools today. That the school histories have been adversely affected by the political turbulence of the Vietnam era is undeniable. Yet the Negro cowboys and other affirmative-action representatives who currently clutter up their pages will not last long; indeed, they may already be headed for oblivion, as today's fad of "back to basics" gathers momentum. Even Scott, Foresman & Company, publishers of the egregiously trendy *America! America!*—which contains the only female pirate in historiographical captivity—has indicated that future editions of the book will probably offer its readers a more staple diet than heretofore.

But should the female pirate walk the plank and the Negro cowboys have their last round-up, the basic problems of the contemporary textbook will remain. Perhaps the most disappointing thing about *America Revised* is its revelation of how very little thought Miss FitzGerald has given to these problems. Thus she hopes that the textbook of tomorrow will include more economic history and more intellectual history, but she voices these sentiments without acknowledging that such improvements would inevitably entail a cutback in political history. In a time when more and more high-school graduates are unable to tell their college professors who John C. Calhoun was, or whether President Polk came before President Cleveland, a deemphasis of political history does not seem advisable. Miss FitzGerald also yearns for a generation of textbooks that would be as well written as David Muzzey's were, even though every report on the reading ability of today's schoolchildren indicates that Muzzey's prose would be over the heads of more young readers than not.

Miss FitzGerald's naiveté about the intellectual condition of textbook authors is even greater than her ignorance of the intellectual condition of their student audience. The first task of anyone who is seriously interested in putting better-written textbooks into the schools is to draw attention to the fact that fewer and fewer historians of our time know how to write the English language with anything like the felicity of David Muzzey. Miss FitzGerald is all too eager to criticize the capitalistic publishers for burdening their authors with stylistic consultants, but on the question of whether those authors need all the literary help they can get, she has nothing to say.

MISS FITZGERALD also seems completely unaware of various intellectual developments in the historical discipline which militate against the emergence of better textbooks. By and large, American historians of today no longer write narrative history. Many of them are also convinced that writing political history is an exercise in futility, and that biography is the art form of a vanished era (which is why they do not care that there is no satisfactory biography of Henry Clay or of Daniel Webster, *inter alia*). Under the influence of the allegedly hard-headed social sciences, historians have forsworn big books encompassing many themes and spanning long periods of time in favor of extremely specialized and narrow books—town studies, ethnic studies, studies of the voting habits of Old Light Presbyterians in Sheboygan in the 1890's, and the like. Besides being of limited intrinsic interest, these books are self-contained; they do not relate easily to other sorts of data, or even to other studies in the same genre; they cannot be stitched together into revelatory patterns. In the face of criticism of their work's inconsequential scope, the historians recite the words of their favorite social scientist, Clifford Geertz: "The task . . . is . . . to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them." The decline of the textbook, in other words, is a function of the larger decline of holistic history. Not until the American historical profession recovers its confidence in the worthwhileness of older forms of historical writing will there be any significant improvement in textbook writing.

Alas, Miss FitzGerald never gets within ten miles of this sort of analysis. The criticisms she is interested in making are political, and she calls on us to believe in what she says because of the evenhandedness of her judgments. If she denounces the textbooks of the 50's for excesses of conservative complacency, she also reproves the books of the 60's for excesses of radical militancy. Yet in spite of her great show of nonpartisanship, she remains the same ideologue who wrote *Fire in the Lake*. Her hope is that *America Revised* will restore the authority of the American history textbook on leftist terms.

Thus, she laments the fact that existing textbooks do not raise "the profound question of whether poverty—if only relative poverty—is built into the structure of capitalism." She is also disgusted that the textbooks have never had the courage to reveal the dark side of the history of rural America. "It is possible to imagine," she says, "that the radicals of the 60's, such as Tom Hayden and Sam Brown, associated themselves with the Populist tradition because their American histories told them a lot about Robert La Follette and nothing about the rural, reactionary, Catholic-hating, Jew-baiting strain in the movement." Of all the

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wonderful sentences in *America Revised*, this is my favorite. While it is true that Robert La Follette campaigned for certain radical ideas in the 1890's, he was a Republican, not a Populist. As for the religious hatreds expressed by the spokesmen for rural radicalism at the turn of the century, their prejudice was merely one manifestation of a widespread sentiment which encompassed the city as well as the countryside; to single out xenophobia as a distinguishing characteristic of Populism is not only historically misleading but fosters irrational suspicions of rural America. Finally, the reference to Tom Hayden and Sam Brown is so gratuitous that one suspects they are mentioned only because Miss FitzGerald wanted their names in her book.

Onlookers & Participants

BRITAIN AND THE JEWS OF EUROPE 1939-1945. By BERNARD WASSERSTEIN. *Oxford University Press and the Institute of Jewish Affairs. 389 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID VITAL

THE theme of this book—albeit unspoken—is guilt. But not the immeasurable guilt of the principals. The master killers of modern Germany are virtually absent from the story Bernard Wasserstein has to tell. Hitler, Goering, Himmler, Heydrich, Eichmann, and the rest appear only fleetingly. The great army that served them with such efficiency and (to use a word much favored in our times) *sincerity*—the *Einsatzgruppen* and the death-camp crews; the French policemen who did the Gestapo's work so diligently; the Polish and Ukrainian nationalists who cut down the stragglers and escapees from ghetto and camp; and so on down the list—all these are on the margin of the present story. Collectively, they and their purposes are the given data, the fixed point to which the actions of others refer. And in any event, their record is now well known, if perhaps still not fully understood.

What is less well known and understood hardly at all is the record of those who were *onlookers* while the Jews of Europe were put to death. These were a mixed lot: the Wehrmacht officers who looked the other way; the half-hearted collaborators of Nazism; the neutrals; the Arabs who played a crucial, if silent, role because it was on their behavior that the decisions of others turned; the Allied powers actively fighting the Germans; and, finally, from their corner of the ring, those Jewish public figures who were fortunate enough to be beyond the grip of Germany—Zionists and anti-Zionists, in Palestine, in free Europe, and in the United States.

This book is about just one class of such onlookers, the British. More particularly, it is about the British government. Other classes are referred to, but only briefly and insofar as they impinge upon Wasserstein's main subject (a matter to which I shall return). What we are presented with is a professional historian's meticulous account of British policy constructed principally out of materials furnished by British officialdom itself, namely, the archives of the Foreign, Colonial, War, and Home Offices, the Cabinet Office, and a number of lesser, outlying branches of the British machinery of wartime government. And since the British civil service operates to a very notable extent on the basis of written memoranda, dispatches, and minutes, and the standard of clear and precise written English that has traditionally obtained within it is very high, the results are extraordinary. For, quite apart from improved understanding of the subject, we are provided with an unusual insight into the minds and mores of the men concerned—statesmen, civil servants, diplomats, soldiers, colonial administrators, and so on. And beyond that, there runs through all the documents that Mr. Wasserstein has so scrupulously analyzed an instance of the eternal tension between the dictates of private morality and the dictates of *raison d'état* quite as acute as the human mind and the modern experience can ever have provided.

THE problem which the German war against the Jews set the British was a complex one, and hindsight and the superior perspective of a later generation should not be allowed to simplify it. Some time passed before the full dimensions and intensity of that war were thoroughly understood. Some of those involved did not want to grasp them until it was all over. The fear that special and explicit sympathy for the Jews might somehow spoil the clear outlines of the fight against tyranny, and serve to confirm Goebbels's line that the war was being fought in the Jewish interest, was genuine, even if we, today, may think it misplaced. Equally genuine, if equally misplaced, was the fear of a rise in anti-Semitic feeling in Britain itself if too many Jews were admitted to the island. The question of whether it was politically and militarily expedient and, indeed, proper to treat with the Germans directly (or even indirectly) on the matter of the Jews while the war was raging (exchanging Jews for trucks, as the Gestapo suggested in the most notorious case) was not easily answered. Least of all were the professionals of Whitehall the men to answer it with imagination and breadth of spirit. Where and when the British *were* inclined, however cautiously, to be helpful, they found themselves alone. No support worth mentioning accrued to them from any other quarter, least of all from those which mattered most: the United States (until the change which came very late in the day) and the Dominions. But above all, there was Palestine. There, as recently as 1939, policy had at last been set in the famous White Paper, and the broad strategic considerations from which it stemmed seemed to be more valid and necessary than ever once war had begun. In any event, it was a policy the British government (a few mavericks apart) was determined to maintain.

The two interlocked bases of the White Paper policy were (a) a *de facto* end to large-scale Jewish immigration, and (b) an end to any

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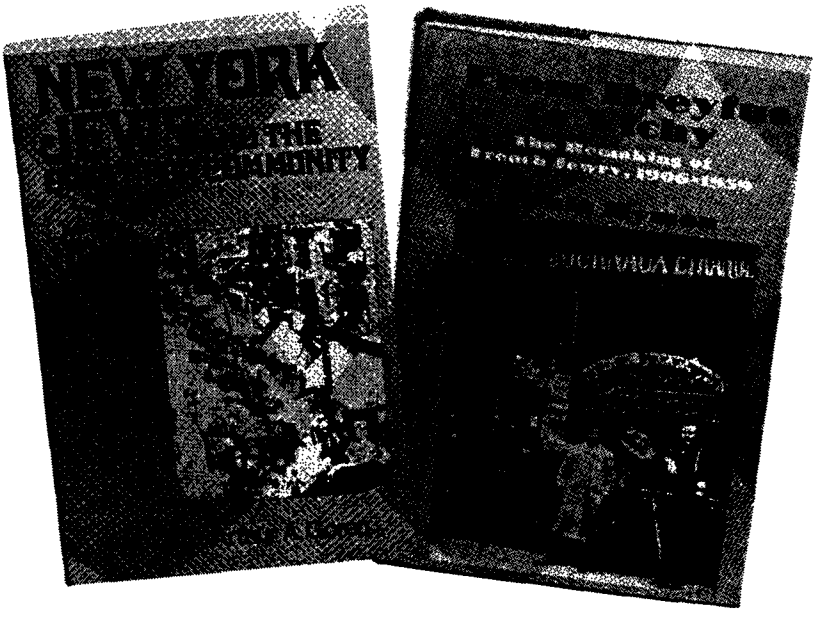
promise or prospect whatsoever of the Jews being granted political autonomy. Cleaving to this policy, the British tended to fight all efforts to bring escapees and refugees from Europe into Palestine and to do so with great determination and often with astonishing ruthlessness. (One must say "tended" because flashes of humanity did light up the dark from time to time.) The logic that underlay this fight is clear. Immigration, as Jews, Arabs, and Englishmen all realized, was the key to, and the condition of, future Jewish independence. To allow the Jews to multiply was, in effect, to concede the fundamental issue embedded in the problem of Palestine. The Arabs would not have it; and the British believed that if they surrendered the Jews to the Arabs they would gain the latter for themselves.

Hence the establishment of an end to immigration as the cornerstone of British policy on Palestine, and indeed, in some respects, on the Middle East; and hence the corollary that to allow immigration was to acquiesce in the public destruction of that policy. This the British would not do; and to defend the policy and fight the attempt to establish Palestine as a recognized haven, every kind of weapon was called into play at one time or another, ranging from brute diplomatic pressure on Balkan countries controlling the principal escape routes so long as such pressure could be exerted, to naval interception of refugee ships. When all else had failed and some rotten hulk, loaded to the gunwhales with starving, stinking, and sick men, women, and children, did manage to run the gauntlet to the Palestine coast and could not be put to sea again because it was obvious it would founder, the people in it might be deported elsewhere, on a fresh ship, even at great expense and inconvenience, but only so long as they did not remain in Palestine itself. Then further ugly scenes would follow when, as might happen, the people resisted:

> [The police] brought out over a hundred of the first batch of people, all of them wounded, completely naked. . . . The remaining young people walked, quite naked, pushed from behind by the British police, until they reached the lorry, and they were then flung into it. . . . Many of the old men fell on the ground and kissed it. They pleaded with tears before the police officers . . . to have pity on them, that they had already passed through Dachau and Buchenwald. And the officers paid no heed to them. . . . A British military officer turned very pale, and left the place in anger.

But why Palestine at all? Because, apart from any consideration of sentiment, there was nowhere else to go for the masses who could have been saved while Germany still stayed its hand (up to the end of 1941 or thereabouts), and for a substantial number even later. As the Evian and the Bermuda conferences and a thousand minor statements, incidents, and inquiries showed abundantly, no haven would be available for them

Historical landmarks.



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anywhere if the Jews continued to rely upon the generosity of others. Palestine was denied them, too; nonetheless it was only in Palestine and for Palestine that there was consistent pressure from anyone to allow them in. But the source of the pressure was the Zionist organization; and in these circumstances, effectively, perhaps fatally, the cause of European Jewry came to be linked with the cause of Zionism in practice as it had always been linked (so far as the Zionists were concerned) in theory.

TO THE fairly prevalent dislike of Jews and to the fundamental lack of interest in their fate which colored the thinking of most of those who came to be concerned with these matters within the British official family, there was now added an intense *political* opposition. And thus it was but a step to an entrenched belief that Jewish pressure on behalf of the actual and potential victims was itself politically inspired, and could therefore be discounted. When the head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency protested the decision to send away the survivors of the *Patria* (blown up in Haifa by the Haganah to prevent its enforced departure to Mauritius), the High Commissioner lashed out at him:

> These people are refugees and the British government is going to take care of them, but not in Palestine. They will probably be much better off in the place to which they will be sent than they have been for years under Nazi rule. [But] to you all this is something political.

So it was, up to a point. British interests, as understood and defined in Whitehall and by its proconsuls overseas, ran counter to the Jewish national interest, as understood and defined—not, of course, by the government of the Jews, for there was none, but by the only group within Jewry that had taken it upon itself to speak for all the people. It is this clash of interests and purposes which makes the case of the conduct of the British during the war one of enduring historical interest and importance and so poignant. That and, of course, the cruel consequences for the refugees—noted by Whitehall, to be sure, but hardly ever considered fully.

In this the British were not alone. The record of other Western, free societies is a poor one too. In some ways it is poorer than the record of the British who, when all is said and done, admitted many more Jewish refugees proportionately than did the Americans, or the Canadians, or the Australians, or any of the major nations of Latin America into *their* lands. But while what the Americans and the rest have to answer for—if indeed it is agreed that they have to answer for anything—is that they sat on their hands during most of the war, the British, in contrast, went so far as to *oppose* the evacuation of Europe and thus were something more than mere bystanders. Driven by what they took to be state interest, they came to play an active, contributory role of their own in the cumulative event we are accustomed to call the Holocaust, full comprehension of their actions often being blocked off for them by a superlatively smooth bureaucratic style:

> What is to happen to these wretched creatures when they are driven back into the open seas, it is rather difficult to imagine [wrote Sir John Shuckburgh of the Colonial Office]. They must go somewhere, but I can think of nobody who would be in the least likely to take them in. However, these are days in which we are brought up against realities and we cannot be deterred by the kind of pre-war humanitarianism that prevailed in 1939.

Perhaps, given their training and deep-seated habits of mind, their very talent for administration depended on this ability to think through a problem selectively, paying detailed attention to some aspects, skating easily over others. Be that as it may, in the end the British were wrong on their own terms and on all counts. It was all in vain. The dream of perpetual Arab acquiescence in their hegemony, always insubstantial, evaporated. Even the Jews got their independence, eventually.

MAY one then conclude that straightforward decency and charity would have served them as better guides to policy than cold-blooded *raison d'état*? Not necessarily. It could be argued with greater force that with respect to the Jews, as in many other respects, one source of the weakness of British policy—of the implementation of policy, at all events—lay in the fact that they did try, after their fashion, to partake of both models of thinking and be guided by both classes of criteria. They did admit some 60,000 Jews into Palestine between 1939 and 1944. They did allow some Jewish military units to be formed. They did not push all the refugees back. There were always divided councils and mixed feelings within the Cabinet. Where there was irritation in Whitehall at some diplomat's deviation from set policy on "absurdly misjudged humanitarian grounds," there were also complaints of having to do the Colonial Office's "dirty work" and of pursuing a policy which savored of "real malice against the refugees, more worthy of our enemies than of us." In brief, there was more than one mood; and Whitehall was never entirely consistent. Perhaps one may see that as a virtue of a sort. It may be worth noting, too, that the evidence presented against Whitehall in this book is all of Whitehall's own making, freely available to anyone who cares to read the files in the Public Record Office at Kew. Is this a sign of innocence; or of arrogance; or of a certain caste's inability to understand the deeper implications of its own thinking and of its own actions; or merely of a belief in following rules? Virtue again, of a sort?

The British official world is the subject of this investigation, and the results are of great interest, even fascination; but in the end, its concern is with the Jews. Never had their weakness, disunity, and isolation cost them so dear as in World War II. Never had the old forms of self-help, intercession, and ransom—*shtadlanut* and *pidyon shevuim*—proved so horribly inadequate. Never did the effort to break out of the old mold and finally emancipate the Jews seem so right and timely. Yet in the light of the present study, there cannot but arise the question whether those so

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earnestly dedicated to the liberation of the Jews by new, more forceful, more systematic, and more lasting means had not, by their entanglement in a fight with the British, only contributed their mite too to the sealing off of the roads out of Europe.

Yet *was* there an alternative policy for the Zionist leadership to pursue? And to press the matter further: was there, could there have been, an alternative leadership to that which the Zionists provided? Certainly, none was in evidence. Indeed, not even all the self-styled Zionists were prepared to fight for the cause of European Jewry by means other than the old ones. As late as December 1942 Stephen Wise still hesitated to ask Roosevelt to do more than receive a delegation and "speak a word of solace and hope" to them. It took Morgenthau, the outsider, to dare to do more. But that was toward the end when most of the damage had been done.

Such questions, while well beyond the nominal scope of Bernard Wasserstein's important book, are inescapable upon reading it. So too is the thought that in many respects it was the early years of the war that were decisive for the fate of European Jewry. What was lost then and what was saved through the bitter, probably ineluctable fight with the British is now beyond calculation, to be sure. What is evident is that within the greater circle of tragedy there was a smaller one, and that it too must be accounted for some day and studied for what it may have to teach us.

Beat the Devil

MEMOIR OF A GAMBLER. By JACK RICHARDSON. *Simon & Schuster. 255 pp. $9.95.*

Reviewed by JANE LARKIN CRAIN

WHEN Jack Richardson's first play, *The Prodigal,* was produced in 1960, he was hailed as one of the most promising young playwrights of his generation. Three more plays followed, but then the author, unable to take himself seriously as a dramatist, left the theater. A cultural and literary intellectual of enormous charm and discernment, Richardson went on to publish essays and reviews in most of the major magazines and to serve as theater critic for COMMENTARY. Now he has given us *Memoir of a Gambler,* a brilliant and unsettling account of an existential quest.

Somewhere around the age of thirty, as Richardson recounts it, having wrecked his marriage and allowed himself to sink into "malaise," he began a serious career as a gambler. Through autobiographical anecdotes and reflections, dramatic vignettes, and high philosophical speculation, Richardson recreates in this book his extended joust with the gambling worlds of Las Vegas, California, and Hong Kong. The journey he relates is an unlikely journey into the interior, in search of meaning and spiritual salvation. But where once such a journey would be set, perhaps, against a knightly background, with high-born ladies to be won in battle against satanic forces, and a grail as the object of the quest and a final confirming sign of divine favor, here the knightly hero is a neurasthenic belletrist, the ladies are ladies of the night, and the grail is a big win at the tables. That Richardson is nevertheless able to invest this seedy and unpromising *mise-en-scène* with intense metaphoric significance is a tribute to his powers as a literary artist.

Richardson's immersion in gambling begins in chic private "clubs" in Manhattan but only truly commences in Las Vegas. Armed with about $17,000, he descends on that city's plush and relatively genteel casinos and promptly hits a three- or four-day losing streak that leaves him emotionally distraught and financially endangered. Determined to recoup, he moves on to the rougher, downtown hotels, where lodging is cheaper and no effort is made to dissemble the raw and brutal urgencies of hard-core gambling.

JANE LARKIN CRAIN *is a critic and writer whose reviews appear regularly in the* Saturday Review *and other periodicals.*

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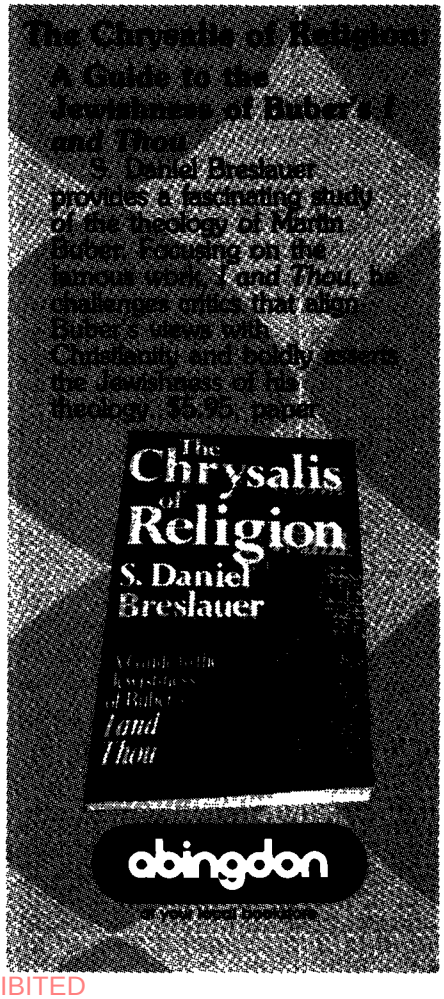
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Unbathed and unshaven, with food stains on his clothing and foreboding in his heart, his run of pitiless bad luck unbroken, Richardson next seeks "a place of spiritual and financial discipline" in Gardena, California, a city near San Diego where legalized gambling, in the form of draw poker, has spawned a local industry. In the town's poker palaces, filled with grim retirees who ante up their social-security checks, the dream of "great sums and pure chance" gives way to the "soft, steady drone of ritualized card playing." Here, determined through plodding diligence to win enough money for "a first-class passage to anywhere far from this place," the author accumulates a hoard while indulging simultaneously in an obsessive love affair with Daisy, a brilliant, slightly crazy poker player whom he describes as "a concentration of cold purity . . . an avernal queen."

FINALLY breaking his sexual "enchainment," Richardson buys a one-way ticket to Hong Kong, where, with the $20,000 or so he has won in Gardena, he intends to lay one last siege to fortune. In Hong Kong his adventures take on their most exotic coloration. He is shown the degenerate side of the city by a young guide who claims to have been "lost" years ago in a poker game by his compulsive gambler of a father; bets on things like "lizards, beetles, frogs, and worms of hideous aspect and great length competing against their kind across courses marked by strings and bottles on a sandy floor"; and falls in for a time with two post-adolescent prostitutes being held in virtual slavery by gamblers who have taken them at cards.

In Hong Kong, too, the humiliations of Las Vegas and Gardena are swept away by a winning streak that he calls supernal; even in the face of the most audacious risks, he cannot lose. Yet one night, sitting at a roulette table, he knows a moment of unextenuated existential dread.

> I understood that, if I lost, I would be utterly alone, deserted even by my own imagination. . . . In the middle of success and singular adventure, I had suddenly lost both the imagination and the heart to gamble.

Although he has often told himself that "anything is supportable if it is the result of . . . having gambled on an extraordinary life," he finds he can no longer risk the trauma of a definitive loss. He decides to return to everyday certainties, to "unfinished work, letters, love, and all the other projects suitable to a modest talent for living."

MOTIVATED precisely by a horror of the mediocre and the commonplace, mostly by the taint of it in himself, Richardson had staked on his gambling exploits his hopes for discovering a grand design for living. To be sure, he gambled for money—for, in the first place, money as a means of avoiding the "small strategies" through which the run of men assures its daily bread; for money as a tangible proof of worldly success; and for money as it assures first-class settings against which the imaginative dramas of life can be played out. But gambling was to do more than win material success. It was to confirm the justice of his hope of having been marked out for a superior fate. During his extraordinary run of luck in Hong Kong, Richardson feels "without vanity, that this was the way [he] was meant to exist" —that is, like a blessed child of fortune.

But as he learns to his pain, the transcendent mastery and happiness he knows at moments when his luck runs high, and when he believes himself to be "at the heart of things that matter," are finally and inevitably blasted by the laws of probability. Since he has set out to discover whether he is a winner or a loser, choosing to test himself in one of the most brutal arenas imaginable, with every throw of the dice his entire being is placed at stake, and the several runs of bad luck he describes leave him utterly negated. From being everything, he becomes a nullity.

Of course, merely to conceive of gambling in such large terms requires a sustained act of the imagination, and the author of this book, observing himself in the grip of compulsion, lucidly connects it with the sort of compulsion that kept "a Humboldt in search of another specimen, a Goethe another line, a Caesar another province." Gambling thus becomes a metaphor for the heroic struggle of the artist to create a sphere of meaning out of his own passionate desire and will. As in gambling, so in art, the effort involves taking risks of essential consequence, and it also involves a belief, at bottom religious, that such a sphere of ultimate meaning exists and that it conforms to an intelligible pattern. Richardson, in short, is a man in quest of a theologically coherent universe.

As he embarks for Las Vegas, Richardson wonders sardonically if he is to have *any* grace in this life. As it turns out, the answer is for the most part no. Despairing of a revelation, in the end he reflects that he will settle for some sign of life from the Devil. "Let good be myriad, elusive, and unattainable, if only evil could be shaped for an honest encounter." So, in a fantasized showdown that closes the book, the Devil puts in an appearance—dressed in a leisure suit and enjoining the author to dispense with his moral theatrics. He warns:

> These are difficult times and the infinite and absolute belong now to mathematics, not to the likes of you and me.
>
> You flinch at this? You want infernal pacts and pleasures, a hell incurred and a heaven lost? If things were only still so simple, bliss and punishment so precise. Then I might have my horns and pedal deformity, you your dice and cards, and good wagers could be made between us. But now there's nothing of high value you could lose.

Thus is the author urged back to the realm of compromise and contingency, the world of the everyday. His gambling has been a playing at games in more ways than one. He will abandon it, having learned that "life is a serious and dangerous business," not to be wasted in a futile search for high meanings and purpose. "Learn to enjoy," the Devil tells him, "the imprecision of things that have no number or color to them. Learn to dream and love in universals. Ac-

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quire a taste for paradox and resignation."

That Jack Richardson has acquired a taste for paradox and resignation, *Memoir of a Gambler* impressively demonstrates. More than that, the book is itself a kind of solution to the spiritual dilemma it describes, for in it, Richardson not only imposes his supple imagination, Napoleon-like, on the intractable materials of his life, but achieves a level of artistic grace that was clearly never his even in the illuminated blaze of his biggest win at the tables. A writer of almost ominous sophistication, Richardson in telling his moral fable strikes a remarkable and altogether moving balance between his ironic and often grimly funny sense of his own ineluctable morality and his still passionate attachment to longings that made a mockery of any notion of human limits. In that balance one might almost say that he has found a combination to beat the Devil.

Pilots & Astronauts

THE RIGHT STUFF. By TOM WOLFE. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 436 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by RACHEL MARK

"ALL must hope," Jules Verne wrote, "that someday America would penetrate the deepest secrets of that mysterious orb. . . ." A century later the prescient novelist could have watched the thing unfolding, live, before his eyes. American men sealed themselves inside a vessel very like the "cylindro-conical projectile" of Verne's own creation, sped off to a distance beyond any ever traveled before, and poured out of their ship for a float upon the face of the moon. No doubt the American flag they hoisted on Verne's mysterious orb is still lodged there. The meaning of the event, miraculous, breathtaking as it was, would not have been lost on Verne, whose own three moon voyagers were greeted with "indescribable enthusiasm" at their return—indeed, "To see them first, and then to hear them, such was the universal longing."

It was lost on Americans. In general they received the miracle as though it were a sort of affront to them, a great national embarrassment. The same people who, less than a decade earlier, had given all that heart and soul had to offer to their first men in space, now turned their backs on the whole enterprise. Why? There was the chilling, if familiar, sound of retreat in the explanation that made the rounds: Americans could hardly be expected to find science and its heroes tolerable, let alone inspiring, while their technology was engaged in the destruction of Southeast Asia; or, worse, proving altogether useless in the great battle against poverty and oppression here at home. A country, in other words, with something to apologize for.

If the language has changed somewhat, the idea itself still has as much currency as it had ten years ago. Yet in light of the universally favorable response Tom Wolfe's new book has gotten—it is hailed on all sides as the first, the long-overdue, the *necessary* celebration of the original round of American astronauts—one might be tempted to believe otherwise. Over the years Tom Wolfe has set his original mind to caustic descriptions of people who have done much to nurse along American self-denigration. He started with *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* in 1965, and continues today in the short pieces and drawings that adorn the pages of *Harper's* magazine. In the process he has produced some of the most brilliant social criticism to see print, and allied himself with the defenders of this country.

The Right Stuff is about the "space race," from its inception during the height of the cold war in 1957 to its denouement in 1963 when the bloodless struggle with the Soviets simmered down; it is about the characters chosen by NASA to participate in the space program: the chimpanzee who went up first, the men who followed after him, their wives; and it is about the Air Force pilots—and one in particular—whose experimental jet flights beyond the sound barrier were the precursors of space travel. Wolfe's formidable literary virtues are at work in this book, providing every bit of the graceful language that is always his strong suit, and, better, rendering a portrait of true old-fashioned American heroism.

THROUGHOUT the late 40's and early 50's, men were busy at Air Force bases all over the country, inching their way up a "dizzying progression of steps and ledges, a ziggurat . . . and the idea was to prove at every foot of the way up that pyramid that you were one of the elected and anointed ones who had *the right stuff. . . .*" The pilot with the right stuff was the one who could literally flirt with death in his plane, day after day, and keep going after more, until he actually could not live without it. *"Manliness, manhood, manly courage* . . . there was something ancient, primordial, irresistible about the challenge of this stuff." At the top of the ziggurat stood Edwards Air Force Base in California, and it was at the top because a pilot named Chuck Yaeger was quartered there.

During World War II Yaeger had been the personification of bravery in combat. In 1943, at the age of twenty, this non-com Army Air Force flight officer had taken his pure, calm, unflinching imperturbability—a legacy of the Appalachian region from which he hailed—into air battle with the Germans, and done his country more than proud. For example:

> On October 12, 1944, Yaeger took on and shot down five German fighter planes in succession. On November 6, flying a propeller-driven P-51 Mustang, he shot down one of the new jet fighters the Germans had developed . . . and damaged two more, and on November 20 he shot down four FW-190's. . . . By the end of the war he had thirteen-and-a-half kills. He was twenty-two years old.

RACHEL MARK, *a new contributor, is on the editorial staff of* Newsweek. *Her reviews have appeared in the* Wall Street Journal *and the* American Spectator.

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In 1947 Yaeger was selected to go to Edwards (then called Muroc) to try to fly a newly developed rocket-powered plane, the X-1, at the speed of sound. It was believed that that speed was an absolute, a barrier, probably unreachable and certainly unsurpassable. The flyers who had tried it before had either disintegrated with their planes or returned to earth to tell of the complete loss of mechanical control, and of pitching and buffeting so fierce that "listeners got a picture of a man in ballroom pumps skidding across a sheet of ice, pursued by bears." Yaeger took on the job coolly, and at his regular Army captain's pay, because it was there, and because he did not believe the barrier really existed. He got into the X-1 with two broken ribs (two days earlier he had fallen, drunk, from a horse, and hidden the fact from everyone, lest he be disqualified from this flight), took it *past* the sound barrier, and returned, as unruffled as ever.

This was only the first of countless experiments with the limits of courage that Yaeger would perform at Edwards, and it established him, for every ambitious flyer in the country, as the "most righteous of all the possessors of the right stuff," the man to be emulated above all others, to be imitated in every gesture, including his "poker-hollow West Virginia drawl."

So Edwards became the place where the best of America's Air Force flyers desperately wanted to —and usually did—end up. And after the manner of Yaeger they pursued the right stuff on the quiet, without publicity—indeed, spurning it—carrying on wildly in the air with F-86's, F-100's, X-1's, X-15's, and equally wildly on the ground with fantastic amounts of alcohol and a lot of drunken, reckless driving. They daily experienced "the edge of space, where the stars and the moon came out at noon . . . an atmosphere so thin that the ordinary laws of aerodynamics no longer applied and a plane could skid into a flat spin like a cereal box on a waxed Formica counter and then start tumbling, not spinning and not diving, but tumbling, end over end like a brick"; and, often enough, they knew the thrill of emerging intact from such a tumble. A pilot's greatest fear in fact was a fear of being "left behind"—of finding himself one day, for whatever reason, unable to go up—and most would rather have died than experience that.

But the right stuff was something that went entirely unmentioned. No one ever talked about his own bravery or the bravery of others. If a pilot went down,

> the unspoken message was: Too bad! There was a man with the *right stuff*. There was no national mourning in such cases, of course. Nobody outside of Edwards knew the man's name. If he were well liked he might get one of those dusty stretches of road named for him on the base . . . But none of that mattered!—not at Edwards—not in the Brotherhood.

These pilots only cared for their extraordinary, death-defying flights to the edge, wishing, ultimately, to be able to carry on with them "in a cause that means something to thousands, to a people, a nation, to humanity, to God." As for the nature of the stuff itself, it was clear to them that outsiders could not understand it.

WHEN the Soviets sent Sputnik I into orbit around the earth in October 1957, Yaeger *et al.* were hardly impressed. Space travel had already been acknowledged to be the next, obvious step for the Air Force, and the pilots had begun their training for it, preparing themselves to handle more and more sophisticated jet rockets. Compared with what they had done, and certainly with what they were about to do, in manned flights, this event seemed to them hardly worth bothering about.

But Sputnik struck terror into the hearts of politicians and newsmen. The Russians had successfully developed a hydrogen bomb four years earlier; with the launching of the satellite, they now asserted an unexpected measure of superiority. It took all of about two weeks for panic, and excitement, to infect the entire nation, and the race for dominance—for survival—was on. In one single blow, the Soviets had given us the space race, and as they continued to beat us time after time into the ozone, it became the general view that American superiority must be reestablished by the creation of the first manned space mission.

The Air Force program, however, was still in the planning stages, and would not be able to meet the deadline now imposed. So the government put the space race into the hands of the recently formed National Aeronautics and Space Administration—which was prepared to forfeit perfection for the sake of haste—and NASA devised the idea of putting a man inside a capsule and shooting the capsule into space on top of a rocket. Instructions came from President Eisenhower to pick prospective astronauts from among the military pilots already on duty, for "their records were immediately available, they already had security clearances, and they could be ordered to Washington at a moment's notice." As for actual piloting, it would not be called for: "The specifications were that they be under five feet eleven and no older than thirty-nine and that they be graduates of test-pilot schools, with at least 1,500 hours of flying time and experience in jets, and that they have bachelor's degrees 'or the equivalent.'"

The right stuff did *not* seem to be a qualification, and members of the Brotherhood shrugged their shoulders with disdain at the project. In no time, however, it was bewilderment they were feeling. Following the presidential fiat, NASA had gone directly to the flying ziggurat and picked the prospective astronauts from its *lower* levels. Suddenly, men who had not quite attained the full measure of the right stuff were taking on, in the eyes of the American public, "the archaic mantles of the single-combat warriors of a long-since forgotten age"; suddenly, the people of this country, never having been privy to the way things worked in the flying fraternity, were switching the rules around, and turning these somewhat lesser beings into heroes of dramatic proportions. Americans had no dearer wish than to "fawn over them, bathe in their magical

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aura, feel the radiation of their righteous stuff, salute them, wish upon them the smile of God . . . and do their bit in bestowing honor upon them *before the fact* . . . before they got up on top of the rockets to face the Russians, death, flames, and fragmentation."

NASA had based its choices not on how much bravery and resourcefulness these men possessed, but rather on their ability to withstand an arduous—and humiliating—battery of medical and psychological examinations. In fact, the process had eliminated the most daring of the lot, and the list, narrowed down to the necessary seven—Al Shepard, John Glenn, Gus Grissom, Scott Carpenter, Gordon Cooper, Wally Schirra, and Deke Clayton—actually contained one or two who had not done even minimally extraordinary flight testing. Though some of them had grumbled (privately) through the medical ordeal, all seven had been willing to be treated like laboratory animals. Worse, the knowledge that "The astronaut would not be expected to *do* anything; he had only to be able to take it," did not seem to bother them.

And they were going public: at endless rounds of press conferences, meetings with Congressmen, factory dedications, the seven made their appearances; with John Glenn at the helm, unabashedly invoking God, family, and country ("when he was no more than nine years old, he had been the kind of boy who would halt a football game to read the riot act to some other nine-year-old who said 'Goddamn it' or 'Aw shit,' when a play didn't go right"), they found themselves not just submitting to, but actively participating in these things. Furthermore, *Life* magazine had contracted for the exclusive rights to their stories, and article after article was coming out, portraying each one and his family as creatures of perfection (*Life* even airbrushed away their skin blemishes). Not even the knowledge that the first run into space had been made by Ham, an "operantly conditioned, aerospatially desensitized" chimpanzee, mitigated the adulation. When Al Shepard got his turn to be the first man in space, in May 1961, it mattered not at all to the nation waiting breathlessly down below that he was up there doing much the same things that Ham had done; or that every one of the remaining five (Deke Clayton was grounded because of a heart problem), with some variations, followed similar procedures. Ticker-tape parades, White House receptions, Distinguished Service Medals, the sight of grown men weeping—this and much more was their reward.

THUS Tom Wolfe on the astronauts. Reviewers of this book, while offering its author indisputably well-deserved praise, have consis-

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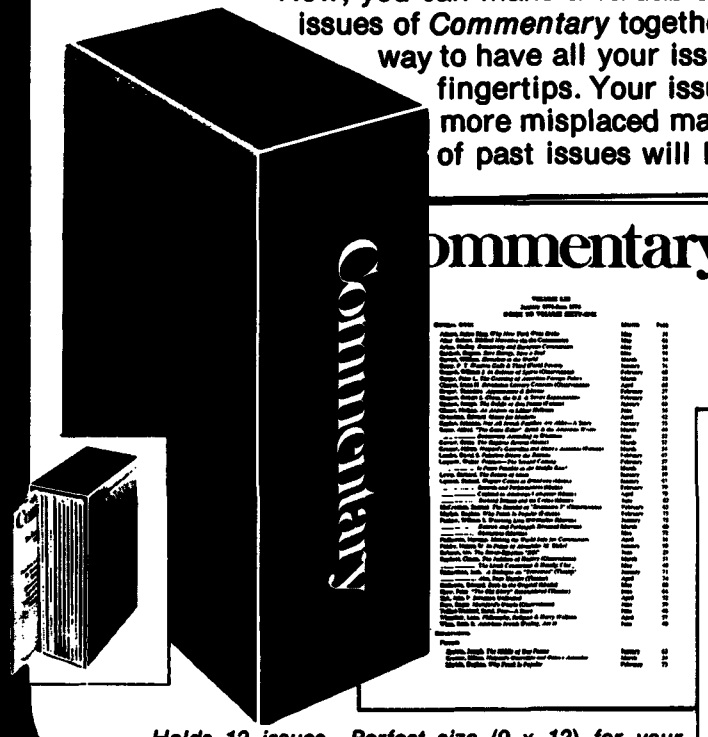

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tently—and with good reason—neglected to come to terms with its real point. And that is that far from being a celebration of the astronauts, *The Right Stuff* is as denigrating a portrait of them as may ever have been rendered. Wolfe would have us believe that the honor that was lavished on the astronauts, both before and after the fact, was undeserved. The right stuff, a most desirable and enviable quality, was possessed by the test pilots, not by the astronauts. He does grant in passing, near the end of the book, that Gordon Cooper's flight, the last of the original round, "had shown they could handle it in the classic way, out on the edge." But the tale of Cooper's flight ends with an account of his being forced to reenter the earth's atmosphere manually, after the loss of automatic controls. As this rather tension-filled episode closes, the ubiquitous and marvelous Yaeger reappears to steal the scene, in a horrifying rendition of his near death in a jet crash. By comparison, Cooper's peril seems a meager business. Such deliberate contrasting of astronaut to test pilot marks the book from beginning to end. Astronaut does not benefit from the contrast.

Nor is the invidious comparison restricted to the narration of events. In characterization, too, Wolfe chooses one side over the other. Yaeger, particularly, is alive, and though somewhat remote, exciting. He is a person one has met before in literature, and more often at the movies, a tough, hard, brave man, a man of the frontier. The astronauts, on the other hand, if they do not all seem as buffoonish as John Glenn ("the Presbyterian version of a monk. . . . A saint, maybe; or an ascetic; or maybe just the village scone crusher"), are little more than flat caricatures. Wolfe's derision of Glenn is especially telling. For Glenn, of all the seven, is the one who would best have fit the frontiersman bill. Having shot down his fair share of MiG's during the Korean war, he returned home to volunteer his services as test pilot *par excellence*. At the Navy's Patuxent River Test Pilot School he "dreamed up the F8U transcontinental run. . . . [N]o one had ever made a sustained coast-to-coast flight at an average speed of greater than Mach I [the speed of sound]. . . . He pulled it off on July 16, 1957, flying from Los Angeles to Floyd Bennett Field, near New York, in three hours and twenty-three minutes." Any substantive difference between Glenn and the rest of the Brotherhood escapes the eye; and yet Wolfe derides him, and attributes his efforts and his accomplishments to mere opportunism.

Why, then, the choice of test pilot over astronaut? Superficially, it seems to have been made out of fastidiousness. That is, Wolfe does not seem to like the loud and frequently corny proclamations (here, again, John Glenn is the greatest culprit) made by the astronauts about the ideals of their country; and he seems to like as little the thrill it gave their countrymen. Such overt expression of patriotic sentiment appears to offend the sensibilities, particularly when compared with the taciturn heroism of the lonely, frontier-breaking test pilots.

Underlying the choice is the suggestion that only certain of the notions that have been of value to America may be espoused straightforwardly. These are the old-fashioned things like drinking and driving hard and the private pursuit of manliness. In other words, the essentially apolitical things represented by the test pilots. The astronauts, by contrast, were warriors against an ideological enemy, they were soldiers of the cold war, representatives of a country in active opposition to a political foe. In his derision of the soldiers who participated in it, Wolfe seems to wish to strike at the battle itself. This is the deep fault of his book, and it explains why it has received high praise from people not ordinarily notable for their love of things American. Faced with a choice, Tom Wolfe resurrected the tradition of calling the astronauts bad names, and in so doing capitulated to the inexorable idea of America as a country with something to apologize for.

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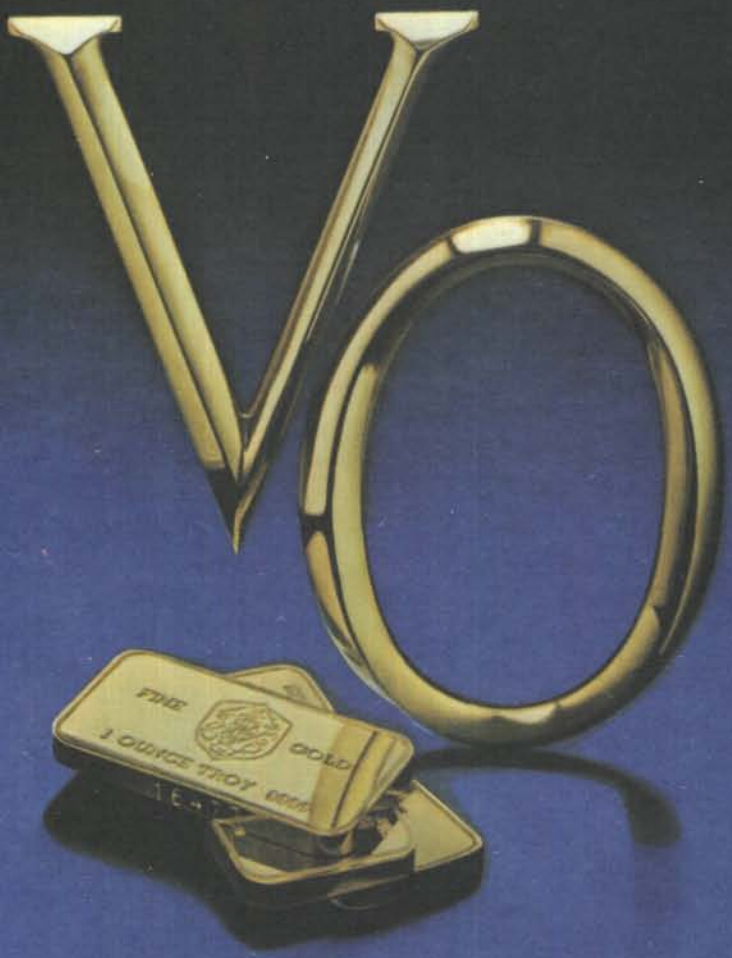

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